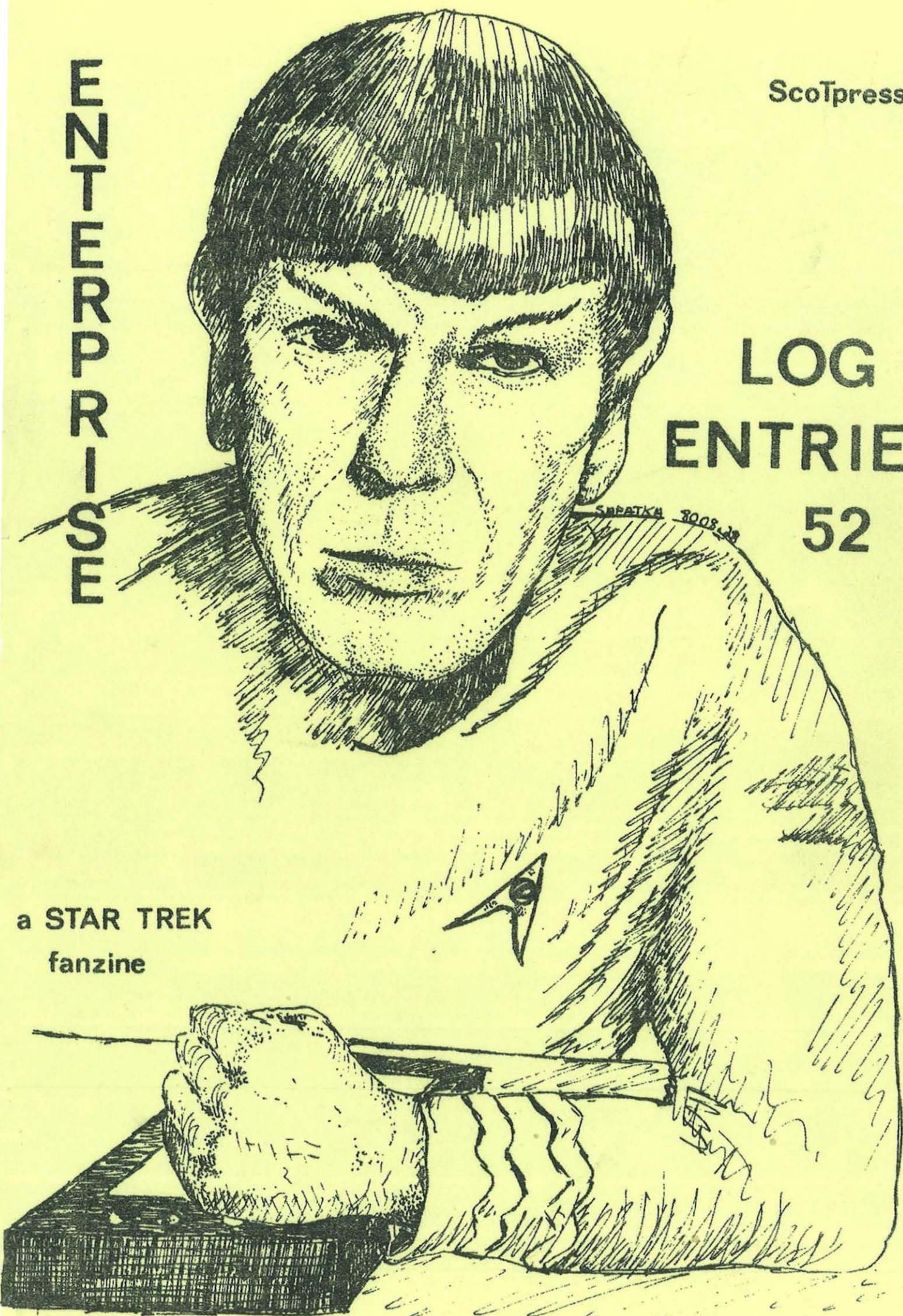


ENTERTAINMENT

Scotpress

LOG  
ENTRIES  
52

a STAR TREK  
fanzine





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## Illustrations

P2: Cartoons by Katy Deery & Mel White  
P10, 21: Martin Delaney

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Editors - Sheila Clark and Valerie Piacentini

Typing - Valerie Piacentini

Proofreading - Sheila Clark

Printing - Janet Quarton & James T.

Collating - Sheila's Chain Gang - Hilde McCabe, Cory King, Frances  
Abernethy, Allison Rooney, Lorraine  
Goodison.

Distracting - Shona(\*&!\*"!)

Stencil Chewing - Shah.

Enterprise - Log Entries 52 is available from

Sheila Clark

6 Craigmill Cottages

Strathmartine

by Dundee

Scotland

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December 1982.

ScoTpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton & Shona.



Hello, and welcome to Enterprise - Log Entries 52.

I had a really marvellous time at Chicon, and I hope you'll forgive me if I take this chance to say a few very personal 'thank-you's' to some of the people who made my visit to America so very enjoyable.

To Lori and Gordon Carleton, who proposed me for the Fan Fun, and who were very generous and welcoming hosts.

To Carol Hydeman, of the Media Oriented Fan Fund, for all her work in arranging the trip.

To Crystal Ann Taylor, who helped in a very special way.

To Barbara and Larry Gordon, for their hospitality.

To all those who voted for me, and so made the trip possible.

To all those marvellous people who, from the moment I stepped off the plane, made me feel welcome and at home.

Thank you all for an unforgettable experience.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of Enterprise - Log Entries. If I have to confess to a favourite story in this issue, I will admit to a liking for Kirk as Alexander stories. (Mind you, I've often wondered what Alexander's reaction would be to Spock and the Enterprise. Ideas, anyone?)

Since this is our December issue, I'd like to say that Sheila and Janet, Shona and Shah, all join me in wishing you a very happy Christmas, and all the best for 1983.

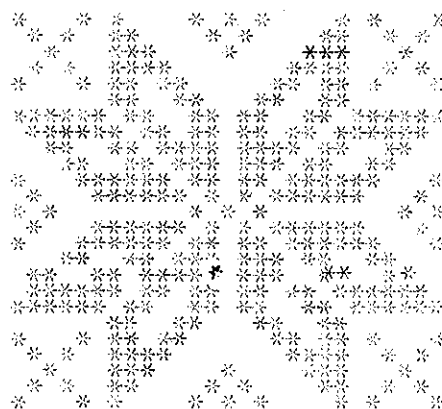
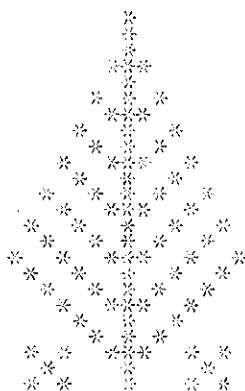
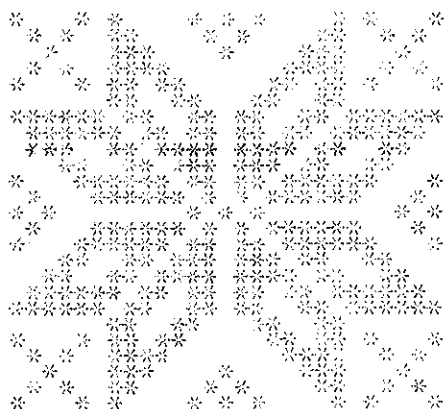
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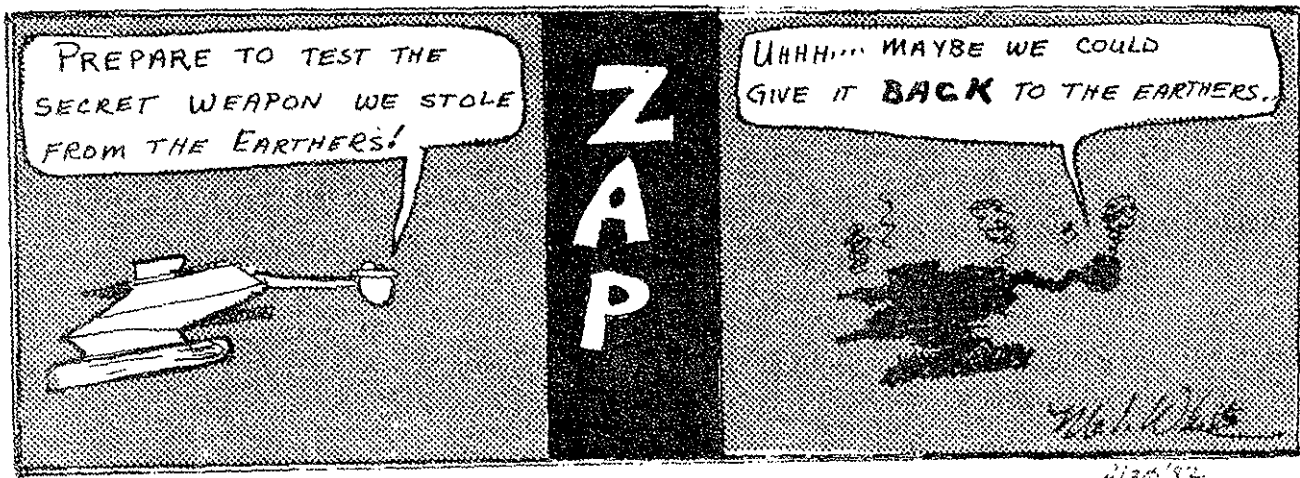
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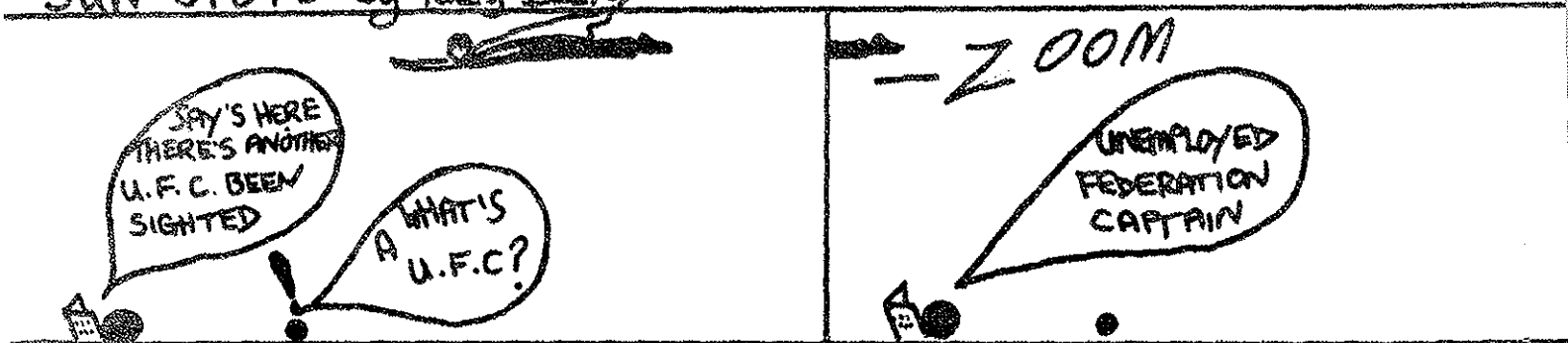
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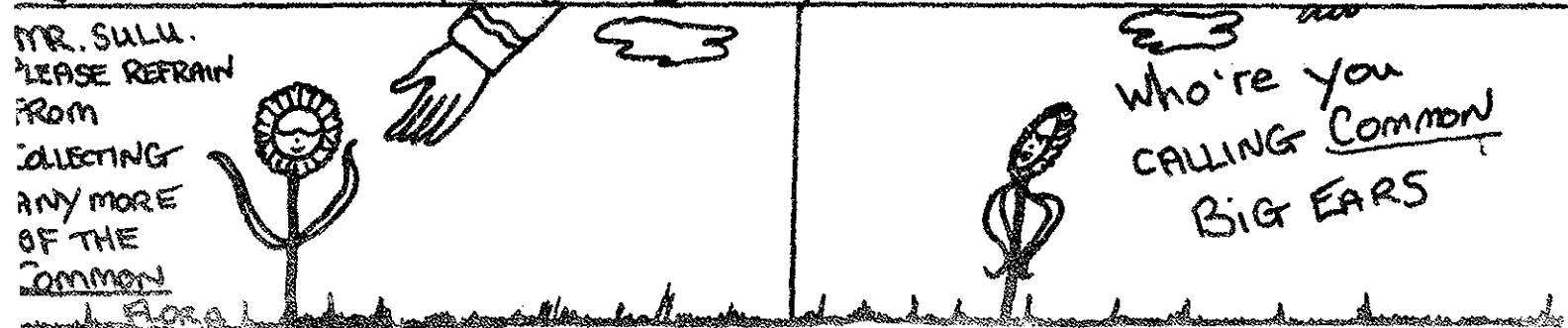




### SUN SPOTS by Kathy DEERY



### SUN-FLOWER by Kathy DEERY





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GREEN DRAGONS

by

Ann Smith

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Dedicated to Stevie, for her suggestions; and to Jenny who, when reading the first draft, described it as a salad with only one piece of lettuce. Hopefully, I have now added a few tomatoes and some cucumber to the filling.

\* \* \*

Sulu groaned and lifted his eyes heavenwards. Chekov and Scotty had been arguing over their pet theme, to wit, the superiority of their respective national drinks, all through supper, and he was getting heartily sick of the subject. He wouldn't have minded, but this was simply another in a long line of arguments on this particular theme, and he decided that if he was ever going to get any break from the roundabout, he'd have to step in and do something to settle the matter once and for all. With this end in view he set himself to thinking - not an easy matter with the two opponents still locked in verbal combat.

Tomorrow they would be orbiting Erani for a sopt of well-earned R&R, their first since the V'Ger mission, and that gave him an idea. He'd been to Erani before, and while visiting the more dubious night spots with a party of friends had come across a little back street bar which served a drink from his native Japan that made everything else he'd ever tried seem like mother's milk. The best of it was, Chekov hadn't been with him that night. Yes! The Shin La Tou's 'Green Dragons' were just what he needed.

"Na, laddie, I dinna ken whit ye say, ye canna beat a guid Scots whisky." Scotty's voice broke in on his reverie.

"Wodka can," muttered a stubborn Chekov.

"And I say that three Green Dragons will have you both under the table," stated Sulu emphatically.

Two puzzled faces turned to regard him with mild suspicion.

"Vot is a Green Dragon, ven it's at home?" demanded Chekov.

"It's a Japanese Tein-sa wine made from the juices of Plientease Drakonius."

"Never heard of it, laddie, and it'll tak more than a wee drop o' wine to drink me under the table."

"Prove it," demanded Sulu. "I know of a bar on Erani... and to make it a bit more interesting, I'll bet you a week's pay you're staggering after three."

"Aye, ah will, but I'll no' be takin' the bet, ye ken. It wouldna' be fair to be takin' your money."

Sulu smiled to himself, very much aware that where his capacity for holding his liquor was concerned, the Chief Engineer was very sensitive. It wasn't often that he went ashore on what McCoy called 'a bender', but when he did it usually left a wake of inebriated, legless bodies.

"Vine against wodka? No vay!"

"We'll see." Sulu rose, a smile on his face, and tipping his dirty tray into the disposal unit, he left the rec room.

\* \* \*

The following evening found Scotty, Sulu and Chekov wending their way down the narrow streets of Erani towards Shin La Tou's drinking abode. Scotty was a little dubious when they stopped before a dilapidated doorway sporting two rather tawdrily painted Geisha girls and a scarlet dragon. Sulu, however, seemed not to notice, and firmly propelled them into the dimly-lit interior.

Chinese lanterns hung like forgotten ghosts in the thick fog of smoke which



swirled sluggishly at the opening of the door. The grunts, squeaks and rumblings from the various tongues of the imbibers swelled and rolled about them, drawing them into the musty interior.

Steering his companions firmly to the rear of the room, Sulu found them an empty table in a fairly secluded corner and sat down. A few moments later a wizened little Chinaman appeared.

"Ah... so... you want drink... yes?" His old head nodded up and down, setting his single pigtail swinging crazily.

"Yes, three Green Dragons, please," Sulu replied hastily, kicking Chekov under the table to stop him from giggling at the old man's gyrations.

The little black eyes shifted nervously from one to another. "Dragon very strong... You sure I bring?"

"We're sure," replied Sulu firmly.

This time the head wobbled from side to side as the old man shuffled away muttering to himself. "Green Dragons, very strong... no drink... get sick."

A few moments later he reappeared and deposited three long-stemmed glasses filled with a pale green liquid topped with Drakon fruit on the table in front of them, still muttering darkly about Aliens and Dragons.

Lifting his glass, Chekov took a tentative sip, rolling the drink around in his mouth with the air of the connoisseur before swallowing. Shaking his head, he took another mouthful.

"No vay is this a match for wodka," he stated triumphantly.

Sulu just grinned, and watched as Scotty warily took a drink.

"It's no sae bad, laddie," he acknowledged, "but it'll no tak the place o' whisky, ye ken."

"Wait and see," muttered Sulu. "I said three."

"Aye, that ye did, and I'm thinking it'll tak more than three o' these wee beasties to mak ma head spin."

"For once I agree vid you," announced Chekov.

"We'll see, we'll see," Sulu smirked as he called the waiter and ordered another round. The old man took the order, bobbing up and down like a puppet whose strings were being pulled out of unison, muttering incoherently to himself of the foolishness of those who did not heed the old.

For a while the three sat taking amiably and sipping their drinks. As the evening wore on the place became even more crowded and smokey, and eventually Sulu was forced to thread his way to the bar for their third round as he was unable to see an sign of their earlier waiter.

Taking the opportunity this presented he ordered, making sure he had only Tyri, a non-alcoholic drink very similar in colour to the famous Dragons. He had no wish to fall into the trap he had set for his friends - already he felt distinctly unsteady and 'happy'.

Once back at the table he deposited his tray of glasses in front of Chekov, his attention caught by an altercation between an Andorian and a Tellerite, thus failing to note that Scotty picked up the drink he had meant for himself. Reaching for his glass, attention still on the verbal skirmish taking place two tables away, Sulu took a large mouthful and immediately spluttered. That was a Green Dragon!

Quickly trying to cover his consternation he coughed and said, "Went down the wrong way."

Chekov looked slightly puzzled. He had the funniest feeling he'd missed something, but what?



Scotty sipped his own drink, studied it intently for a few seconds, then remarked to no-one in particular, "Och, the more of these ye have, the milder they seem. They'll no tak the place o' whisky in my book."

Sulu, realising that Scotty had his Tyri, deemed it prudent to keep quiet.

\* \* \*

Some time later, having finished their drinks, Scotty, seeing the evening was now well advanced, deemed it time they departed. Rising, the trio weaved their way through the noisy throng to the door and out into the clean, fresh night air. Scotty breathed deeply, and immediately had the strangest feeling that he was suddenly moving through treacle, which was in direct contrast to the light, airy sensation in his head. He could see and hear everything around him quite clearly, yet it seemed that he viewed the world from behind glass... a very disconcerting effect. Glancing across at Chekov to see if he was experiencing any difficulty, he met a broad, somewhat idiotic smile.

Sulu, hardly in a better state than his two companions, linked an arm through the elbow of each man and gaily suggested, "Come on... let's go to... the fair..."

Scotty hung back a little, uncertain. The treacle seemed thicker when he tried to move his limbs.

"Och, I dinna ken it's ma kind o' thing..." he mumbled, trying desperately to master movement.

"Jacksonello's... best this side of Lennninggraad..." piped up Chekov, peering owlishly across Sulu's shoulder at the swaying Scotsman. "Vy are you svaying?" he asked suddenly.

"It must be you, laddie," replied Scotty indignantly. "I'm no' movin'."

Before Chekov could open his mouth to start arguing Sulu began steering them both down the alley and across the square towards the noise and lights of Jacksonello's.

Once through the ornate gates of the amusement park the atmosphere of the fair caught them and swept them along. Laughing and jostling with the crowd the two younger men dragged the reluctant Scot from stall to stall, making him sample most of the alien delights offered. As they progressed a more distinct weaving motion became apparent, which was hardly due to the navigation of the throng.

As the minutes raced by Scotty found it harder and harder to concentrate. The music blaring out all around robbed him of coherent thought, spinning faster and faster in his head. The brightly painted animals and cars on the various rides whirled and flashed. The barkers' hands beckoned enticingly...

A hand caught at his arm, and he blinked as Sulu's face swam into view.

"Le'ss win a Tribble for Uhura."

Dragging his two companions, Sulu ducked beneath a nearby awning, heading in the direction of a brightly-painted booth where old-fashioned guns were set in rows in front of moving targets.

It took a good few credits before the trio finally managed to win a prize between them. To Sulu's disgust the prize turned out not to be a Tribble, but a Snuggle. Accepting the tiny creature with little grace he thrust it disgustingly into Chekov's hands. "Wanted a Tribble," he muttered under his breath.

"Snuggleseses... better," remarked Chekov wisely. "Needs two to breed. Keptin wouldn't like a ship full of Tribbleses."

"Aye, you're right there, laddie," observed Scotty, closely inspecting the little Koala-like creature seated in Chekov's hand.

"Snuggle, snuggle," the creature chirruped happily, opening its big violet eyes wide and staring seriously at Scotty.



"Issa nice little thing," smiled Chekov, tickling it under its bright mauve chin. "Uhura'll like it."

"Not as good as a Tribble," Sulu muttered sulkily.

Further along they stopped to watch a Tyak show, entranced at the strange beauty woven in the combination of music and lights, quite restoring Sulu's good spirits. He even consented to carry Snug Puss, as Chekov had christened the Snuggle, in his shirt pocket. This caused quite a few stares as a bright mauve head topped with large, round, deep purple ears does not precisely match a brilliant red and yellow patterned shirt.

Catching sight of a great loop rearing above the surrounding stalls, Sulu's excitement mounted. "Lessgo... on the Rig Dipper..."

Scotty shook his head. "Ah'm no goin on that beastie."

"Ah...C'mon... please!" pleaded Sulu, urging him forward.

"Ah'm... no goin on tha... tha... thing!" stated Scotty stubbornly.

"Then I will go," announced Chekov in the grand manner of a knight about to set off to rescue a damsel in distress.

"Ye go then, laddie," said Scotty, suddenly beginning to grin as he caught sight of what looked like a haggis stall. "I'll just get masel a bite tae eat."

"Okay. You'd better have Snug Puss, then. See you in a tick!" Hastily thrusting the Snuggle into Scotty's hands, Sulu steered the unresisting Chekov to the pay box.

They bought their tickets and deposited themselves none too tidily in the front part of the car, Chekov muttering something in Russian that sounded rather nasty when Sulu stood on his toe and giggled.

"Here we gooooo..."

The car moved forward and immediately began to gather speed, rushing down the track into the first bend, up the other side, to poise momentarily on the brink, then plummet down the steep slope and into the loop. The two Enterprise officers hung on for grim death, the wind whipping at their faces.

"Wheeee..." shouted Sulu and Chekov in unison as they raced up the curve and the world cartwheeled, sending them once more plunging earthward. Up again to repeat the loop, then down, round the final bend, the car slowing as it reached the flat section before the pay box once more.

Clinging to each other for support, convulsed with laughter, they stumbled out of the car and down the steps to where Scotty was leaning against a gaily coloured post chomping on what looked like a lump of mud wrapped in a white veiny skin.

"Vot is dat?" enquired Chekov, peering at the article through screwed-up eyes.

"That, laddie," stated the Chief Engineer proudly, "is a Scottish Haggis."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Sulu disgustedly. "It looks horrible."

"Och, have ye no heard Rabbie Burns?

Fair fa' your honest sonsie face

Great Chieftan o the puddin' race!

Aboon them a' ye tak your place..." \*

Both men groaned and hurriedly steered the Scot towards the exit.

"Och, ye Sassanachs!" exclaimed Scotty, shaking himself free and stomping ahead, ignoring the hysterical giggles issuing from behind him.

\* 'Ode to a Haggis', by Robert Burns.



The trio had not gone very far through the crowd when Scotty's steps began to slow, and he finally came to a halt, Sulu and Chekov bumping into him.

"Voss... wrong?" enquired Chekov, slightly concerned. "You gone all green... like Meester Spock..." He giggled.

"I dinna feel sae good... If ye'll excuse..." Hurriedly handing the Snuggle he was still carrying to Sulu, he dived quickly behind the nearest marquee, where strange noises told their own story.

"He's sick," said Sulu unnecessarily, a jubilant note creeping into his voice as he carefully stowed the Snuggle away in his pocket once more.

"Ve voit!" replied Chekov, nodding and sinking to the ground.

The two leaned happily against each other to await their friend, and simultaneusly broke into song. Unfortunately for anyone passing near enough to hear, not only were they both out of tune, but both were singing different songs. The end result would have done justice to a cats' concert.

After a while Scotty emerged from the rear of the tent looking a little better but nursing his head. He was stone cold sober, and silently chiding himself for his inability to hold a mere three 'whatever they weres'. Or maybe it had been something he had eaten... that haggis hadn't tasted quite right...

His two companions were still where he had left them, seated back to back and making a noise like a dozen banshees, which did nothing for the hammers beating in his head. Telling them somewhat snappishly to 'Shut up!' he manfully ignored the queasiness still present in his stomach and manoeuvred his two associates onto their feet. Taking a firm hold of each he set off towards the transporter station by the quietest route he could find, desperately hoping that it would be Kyle on duty in the transporter room.

\* \* \*

He was unlucky. By an unfortunate coincidence First Officer Spock was in charge of the transporter controls when Scotty materialised. A slightly raised eyebrow and a look of displeasure greeted the tableau presented by the three officers.

Scotty, standing in the middle, was clutching the back of Chekov's collar in a vain attempt to keep him on his very unsteady feet, while his left arm was firmly planted round a chortling Sulu's waist. Sulu was leaning heavily, one arm wrapped around the back of the Chief Engineer's neck, the waving hand a mere centimetre from the Scot's nose and in danger of colliding with it - a situation that Scotty was unsuccessfully trying to avoid, being somewhat handicapped with both arms occupied in preventing the inebriates from falling.

"It would seem that you are having difficulty, Mr. Scott," remarked Spock dryly as he advanced across the room, arriving just in time to catch Chekov as he wobbled from the transporter platform.

"Meester Spock..." mumbled Chekov, clutching frantically at his superior as his knees buckled under him. "Oocops!"

Scotty, having taken one look at the Vulcan's stony face, retrieved his underling. "Come on now, Chekov - let's be havin' ye away tae your bed."

The Russian's head wobbled up and down in what Scotty took to be a nod of assent. "Meester Spock wouldn't ap... app... like it."

"No, he doesnae."

With a quick glance at Spock to see if he could manage Sulu, who had collapsed in a heap on the transporter platform, Scotty steered Chekov out the door in the direction of his quarters and bed.

Spock, hauling Sulu to his feet, firmly propelled him through the door in Scotty's wake, fervently wishing that he had not been in the transporter room



at that precise moment. Fortunately the corridors were empty, a circumstance for which Spock was forever grateful. It would have been most embarrassing to be observed by any of the crew half dragging, half carrying an inebriated junior officer and following another, equally incapacitated, who was hanging onto the Chief Engineer in a most unseemly fashion.

At last they reached their destination, and having seen Scotty and his charge safely into Chekov's cabin, Spock and his burden walked the short distance to Sulu's cabin, two doors down. A small sigh of relief escaped Spock as he stepped into the privacy afforded by the quarters and deposited Sulu in the nearest chair, intending to remove his boots.

Awareness of where he was seemed to seep into Sulu's fogged brain, and he lurched unsteadily to his feet. "Mr. Spock, I c'n manage... ooops!"

A strong hand prevented him from pitching forward onto his face. "I think it would be wiser if I put you to bed."

Sulu made a gallant effort to pull his wandering senses together, and stood to attention - swaying slightly. "Sir... I wish to apple... appop... I'm sorry," he slurred contritely.

With an exasperated sigh Spock turned him around and headed him into the sleeping area, firmly pushing him down onto the bed.

With difficulty Sulu tried to focus on the stern face above him, vaguely aware that it boded ill for him to be in such a state in the presence of a senior officer, especially one who was at that moment removing his boots. He tried again.

"It's my fault, Mr. Spock..." He got no further as the effects of three Green Dragons overcame him, and his voice faded into gentle snores.

Spock stood for a moment regarding the sleeping form. A movement in the shirt pocket caught his eye, and he watched in amazement as a tiny bundle of mauve fur extricated itself and sat in the middle of Sulu's chest to scratch behind one round ear. The itch satisfactorily alleviated, it gazed round at its new surroundings.

Fascinated, Spock bent down and gently picked the creature up, inspecting it closely. Two violet eyes stared back at him unafraid.

"Snuggle, snuggle," it chirruped.

"Just where did they find you, I wonder?" Spock asked the tiny creature.

Snug Puss settled comfortably into the warmth of the Vulcan's hand.

"Snuggle, snuggle," he replied with the air of one about to embark on a long nap.

Glancing from Sulu's sleeping form to the now curled Snuggle, a winged eyebrow rose. "It would seem that I have been adopted," observed Spock, and still carrying the Snuggle he left the cabin, dimming the lights on the way out. Tomorrow he would have to have a stern word with both Sulu and Chekov, but first he would obtain a full explanation from Mr. Scott. Knowing the Human capacity for 'high spirits', he felt slightly dubious as to what he would unearth when the Chief Engineer was questioned, but as both Jim and Pones were absent from the ship for the next few days, he would have to deal with the matter himself. He only hoped there would be no embarrassing apologies to be made.

Even after all these years he still found Human emotions and reasoning hard to cope with at times, especially when large amounts of alcohol were involved, as was evident in this case.

He met the Chief Engineer just coming out of Chekov's quarters. "If you would accompany me to my quarters, Mr. Scott, I would like a full explanation of recent events."

"Aye, Ah thought ye might," muttered Scotty, eyeing the Vulcan warily and noting the Snuggle apparently asleep in the palm of his hand.



This was not going to be the easiest of interviews. Much as he admired Spock he didn't think he would view the incident in quite the same light as Jim Kirk would have done. The Vulcan understood more about Human emotions than he let on, but as far as Scotty knew he had never succumbed to the effects of alcohol, and so was unlikely to be able to imagine the effects. In that, he was mistaken.

Once inside his own quarters Spock indicated a chair and, sitting down behind his desk, deposited the Snuggle on the cold surface, folding his hands in front of him.

"The details, please."

The cold hardness of the desk top after the warm softness of Spock's hand woke Snug Puss. He looked around him for his cosy bed, chortling angrily. "Cha! Cha...psss!"

Scotty watched in amazed fascination as the Snuggle climbed the linked hands, snuggling into the cave of warm flesh with a sleepy, "Snuggle, snuggle."

Spock did his best to ignore the creature. "Mr. Scott?"

Scotty dragged his gaze away from the nestling Snuggle, and keeping to the plain facts gave an account of the events leading up to the night's revelries.

Spock listened in silence. When the tale was finally told he astonished Scotty by remarking calmly, "I have never been able to comprehend why Humans gain so much pleasure from the consumption of large amounts of alcohol. On the one occasion that I imbibed I found it made me distinctly nauseous, which had a very sobering effect."

"Aye... well, I dinna ken the ins and outs of it masel, Mr. Spock," Scotty replied sheepishly.

After a moment's thought Spock said seriously, "I will overlook the incident this time, as no harm has been done. However, I will see both Mr. Chekov and Mr. Sulu in my office at 0900 hours tomorrow. No doubt they will want their pet back."

"Aye, sir," said Scotty meekly, heaving an inward sigh of relief. "I only hope yon beastie doesnae object, sir. It seems tae have taken a shine tae ye."

Spock ignored the remark, and Scotty rose, intending to take his leave, when Spock asked, "I am curious, Mr. Scott. You do not appear to be intoxicated. May I enquire if Mr. Sulu would have won his bet?"

A faint flush rose in the Scot's cheeks. "Aye, well, in a manner o' speaking ye might say he did."

"I see," said Spock, trying to hide a smile.

"Aye... Ah thought ye might," said Scotty. "Goodnight tae ye."

"Goodnight, Mr. Scott."

Scotty crossed the room. As the door slid open Spock's voice halted him.

"But hear me Sir deil as ye are  
Look something to your credit  
A cuif like him wad stain your name  
If it were kent ye did it."

In astounded silence Scotty stared open-mouthed at the Vulcan before continuing through the door.

\* 'Holy Willie', by Robert Burns.

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Glyn and Lynda Probert

"Spock, can't we out-maneuvre that thing? It's beginning to dent the shuttle's plates."

"Damn you, Spock, I thought you said those things were docile!" McCoy yelled before he hit the floor.

"How long will it take us to land? Can the Columbus take this continuous pounding?" Kirk's voice was raised almost to a shout, being replaced by Spock's calm tone.

In the distance bright blue domes mingled with their surroundings.

"Settlement ahead, Captain, landing coordinates locked in," Spock intervened.

All around his senses were dazzled by the bright red, blue, purple and orange foliage swaying gently in the breeze. His head was filled with their sweet aroma, soothing, caressing.

    Their surroundings held them for a moment before they were brought back to the reality of their mission.

"Yes, Lt. Henderson?"

Spock, who had just appeared from the interior of the shuttlecraft, turned to Kirk.

"Despite the severity of the attack, the shuttlecraft has not sustained any serious damage."



"Thank you. I now suggest we make a search of the area. Mr. Spock, Mr. Depaul and Mr. Voight, you check out those buildings in the distance. Keep in contact with us."

Spock and the two Security officers turned to go. Looking at the doctor and the Lieutenant, Kirk added,

"We will locate the distress beacon and search the settlement."

Walking towards the settlement, Kirk turned to the woman walking at his side. "Lt. Henderson, you were once a pupil of Dr. Vincent Packard. I know all the data stored in the computer, but tell me a little about him personally. What kind of man was he?"

The small young biologist raised her head slightly, shaking her long brown hair over her shoulders. A gentleness spread across her face.

"Well, as you already know, he is a genius in his field of interstellar biology. He's a dedicated man, warm, sensitive... He must be nearing seventy by now, but he's still very active. He's made exhaustive studies of plant life; a caring man who has done a great deal of work in conserving rare plants and animals, he was the obvious choice as leader of this project of harmonising with, instead of fighting against nature. He and his nineteen colleagues were so eager and excited to come here, to start again, to be at one with nature. I can't understand what could have happened to make them send a distress call. What could have happened to them, Captain? Everything seems so peaceful."

"I don't know. That's what we're here to find out."

By this time they had reached the low wall of the perimeter, and setting off in a westerly direction, trampling down thick undergrowth, they found the transmitter in one of the domes.

Turning it off, they looked around. Everything was in place, not a thing had been disturbed, no struggle - as if everyone had just got up and left quickly and quietly. So why the distress signal?

Looking up, McCoy announced, "Jim, you'd think this place had been deserted for months, yet we only received the distress signal three and a half days ago, so how in the blazes are these domes covered in so much foliage?"

Raising her head from the tricorder, Jane Henderson answered, "It seems that the plant life on this planet has a very fast growth rate."

"I suggest," interrupted Kirk, "that at this point we split up to see if we can find anything to explain what's happened here." Turning for the exit he threw over his shoulder, "Keep your communicators handy - just in case."

\* \* \*

On reaching the towers the Vulcan officer turned to the two stalwart Security guards, indicating the area to be covered by each; they departed, tricorders and communicators in hand.

The paths they took each held the same symbols of the past. It was easy to reconstruct, in their minds, the once-beautiful crystal towers from the fragmented remains scattered here and there. Most of the metal structure had been gagged to the ground by heavy vines, foliage and lichen; only the strong survived, staggering under the death-like weight, half digested, reaching for the sky, knowing only time stood between them and eventual disintegration. Slowly, but surely, the flora was reclaiming its territory, making even walking difficult for the Enterprise men.

Twenty minutes elapsed, then Spock heard the familiar tone of his communicator.

"Spock here."

"Voight, sir. I picked up a reading on my tricorder... only it keeps fluctuating... There... it's humanoid... Wait, I see it! It's moving into what looks like an alleyway. Permission to follow, sir?"



Spock paused for a moment. "Permission granted, but keep your phaser at the ready. Try to establish contact with the humanoid if possible, but take no chances. Keep your communicator open and give me a detailed report of your movements. Mr. Depaul and I will join you as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir."

Spock contacted Mr. Depaul and each, using their communicators, moved to join Voight.

"Following now, sir. It's moving fast... am pursuing. It keeps hidden among the shadows thrown by the buildings... Wait, it's gone."

The sound of a tricorder filled Spock's communicator. Seconds passed, then Voight announced, "Mr. Spock, I've picked it up again. It's close by now." Excitement mounted in the young man's voice. "It... it's gone through this alley."

Spock heard the heavy footfalls and panting of the Security officer, followed by a sudden silence. Still gasping, Voight shouted down the communicator.

"How did it get through the alley? It's covered with vines and creepers. I can see it... just make out the form. I'll have to burn my way through the foliage."

The shrill noise of Mr. Voight's phaser filled the ears of Spock and Depaul, who were racing towards the coordinates.

"Can you hear it... feel it... the vibrations? The earth's trembling... It's moving towards me... Agghhhhh!"

Spock and Depaul met at an intersection, both fighting to keep their balance as the ground moved, buildings trembled, dust and crystal fell about their heads.

Static... only static came through both communicators. Depaul shouted,

"Voight! Voight, are you there? Jan... answer me!"

Spock made a quick calculation. "He is around the next corner."

They ran, Spock taking the lead. Clouds of crystal dust swirled and billowed out from the alleyway. The two men ran into it, choking and stumbling. Spock's tricorder was already scanning the collapsed wall.

"There... over there." Depaul pointed to a mass of crystal and metal. From it jutted a hand - a bloody and broken hand. Lying near it was an open communicator.

\* \* \*

Kirk levelled his phaser and fired. A pale beam of pure energy sliced through the foliage covering the door. //Damn stuff grows back almost as fast as you clear it,// he thought.

Turning, he surveyed the path he had just taken. Movement through the dense undergrowth was hard. Bones was right, the place looked as if it had been deserted for years. The solar-powered dome structures were now being engulfed by the brightly coloured vegetation, some already cracking under the tremendous strain of the vice-like grip of the vines.

All the domes so far had been in the same condition, nothing upset or out of place, just empty. Bones and Henderson had already reported as much to Kirk, who at that moment was striding towards the silver, but slightly charred, doorway. Over the door was a sign, 'Dr. V. Packard.'

An unexpected feeling of anticipation shot through Kirk's body. Stepping forward, he entered. He snatched open his communicator.

"Bones, Henderson, I'm at Packard's. Get here - fast!"

\* \* \*



"Life readings all show negative, Mr. Depaul. You may cease your activities."

Depaul turned fiercely away from the rubble he was tearing off Voight's body. "Damn you, Spock, he's my friend!" Anger blazed in his eyes as his words echoed through the alleyway. "How would you feel if it was Jim Kirk under there?"

A moment of silence followed as tears burst into Depaul's eyes. "I'm... I'm sorry, sir," he stammered.

The coolness in Spock's voice softened considerably as he announced, "I think it advisable to inform the Captain of these events." Taking out his communicator he paused as a reading suddenly jerked his tricorder into action. Spock picked up the instrument.

"It would appear that our humanoid friend has reappeared."

"Do you think that thing had something to do with Jan's death, sir?"

"There is too little data to make a conclusion upon, but the life-form is quite near. I suggest we follow it first, contacting Captain Kirk when we have more positive information."

Back down the alley, turning into the first alley, their footsteps resounding off the decaying walls. Coming out into what might once have been a road - now covered in thick vegetation. Mr. Depaul reached for his phaser and blasted. A figure leaped out of shadows and into a ruin as the beam struck the metal above his head.

"Enough, Mr. Depaul."

"But sir..."

"We have no evidence that it killed Mr. Voight. Hold your fire." He then added, "Did you see what it was?"

"It looked like a man, but he moved too fast to get a good look at him."

Moving quickly across the road they entered the decaying building. Quickly looking around, then at his tricorder, Spock stated, "It would seem to have disappeared. The readings on my tricorder have ceased."

A few minutes were spent searching the area then, with no readings to follow, the pair retraced their steps back to the body of Voight.

Moving down the second alleyway, Depaul broke into a run. Vines and foliage were already covering the rubble, which itself remained undisturbed. On reaching it, Depaul turned wildly to Spock.

"He's gone, sir! Jan's body has gone!"

\* \* \*

McCoy and the Lieutenant bust through the door. "What is it, Jim?" the doctor shouted, before the sight in front of him stopped him dead.

His eyes scanned the room. Item after item smashed, slashed, upset, senselessly and brutally destroyed or damaged. Clothes torn, furniture wrecked, plants scattered, and in one corner the ashes of a bonfire.

Wading through the destruction, Lt. Henderson suddenly shrieked.

"What is it?"

Looking to where her finger pointed they saw a patch of caked blood covering the floor.

Suddenly all three jumped as Kirk's communicator bleeped.

"Yes?"

"Spock here, Captain. We have some disturbing news for you. Mr. Voight



is dead, and his body has disappeared."

\* \* \*

"Spock."

The Vulcan moved from the entrance into the dome and towards Kirk. "We searched the area again after I talked to you, but without success, sir. No tracks, or traces of how the body could have been moved in such a short space of time without disturbing the fallen masonry. It is also unusual that you did not feel any earth tremors. They were quite strong."

Kirk nodded thoughtfully. "What about this humanoid form?" he added.

"It has not registered on my tricorder since we gave chase."

"Do you think it deliberately drew you off so that someone or something else could get at Voight's body?"

"That is a possibility, but whoever did it did not register on the tricorder, and it moves with great agility."

"Everything on this planet seems to move with great agility," Kirk laughed. "Now, getting back to our mission," he added, "I've been in contact with Scotty on the Enterprise. The continuing irregular solar activity still makes it too risky to use the transporter, and communications have also been affected. There's a great deal of interference, but I've managed to discover that two robo-mineral ships have taken orbit around the planet."

"Interesting, Captain, but surely they would not affect this planet and the settlers?"

"That, I mean to find out. While searching through Dr. Packard's dome Bones found a small safe. We had to blast our way in. There we found a portable video-log recorder with tapes. We hope they will explain something of what's been happening here. Now that you're here, we'll begin."

Kirk and Spock rose to join McCoy, Henderson and Depaul, who were already seated around the machine.

"Okay, Jim?"

The Captain nodded, and McCoy slipped in the cassette and turned it on.

The screen became a blaze of light which melted into a mild, warm countenance. The grey-haired man was sitting at a table, his soft wrinkled face beamed out at them, crinkling with each smile. A tuft of thick grey fringe fell over his bright brown eyes, hair which he intermittently tossed back as he talked.

"Dr. Packard!" breathed Henderson.

The tape began. The voice, soft but firm, stated.

"The date is July 14th Earth time, but being a new enterprise on a new planet, we will begin our years at the beginning, 14-7-01. This log will be used intermittently, only when I think it necessary.

"Today my colleagues and I begin our new adventure. Today we begin our new life. The only thing to report are what seem like buildings in the distance. When we have time we will explore them. In the meantime there is much to do - so much."

The jubilant face flashed off the screen. A few seconds later it was back.

"3-1-02. We have erected domes to live in, and planting and tending crops has begun. It is like summer all year round, and everything grows at such a speed. We use the minimum of mechanical aids here, the earth feels so good in your hands.

"We finally searched the town. It's in a desperate state of collapse.



Vines and growth have choked the life out of what remains. We have no idea who the last culture were."

A brief moment of darkness, then, "27-11-03. Many rare minerals are being found here. Placantum, Dizithium, Tri-Fordium, Quatark. It has sent my colleagues into great excitement. One, my close friend and second-in-command Dr. John Ashman, has clearly set out how much benefit, commercially, this planet could be to us. I must make them see sense; to do this could destroy such a beautiful place."

His face contorted in a grimace before disappearing. It was replaced by a weary, tired-looking one.

"11-5-04. I have just attended a meeting. A very important meeting. I have pleaded for sanity, but Dr. Ashman is an eloquent speaker. He has been working on my colleagues for several months, filling their heads with fanciful notions of grandeur and luxury. Talk is only about how much they can gain here by exploiting the mineral deposits. I was against it, but my hold is already slipping. How can they do this?" A tearful face slipped from the screen.

"29-2-05. It is too late. The 'madness' has struck. Greed - one of man's oldest foes. They have contacted mining corporations on other planets, offering a percentage for their help. Photonic bore machines for blasting and phaser drills have already arrived, and soon robo-mineral ships will arrive to carry off the deposits. I am alone - rejected by the community." He picked up the burned remains of a small winged creature from the table in front of him.

"As you can see, they have no regard for the life on this planet. Sometimes they drill and blast haphazardly, turning up no minerals, caring nothing for those that block their path, turning this Utopia into a battlefield, where only the original inhabitants are the victims." Raising his voice to shouting level he moaned, "How much more havoc must they wreak on this innocent world?"

"Dr. Packard seems to be becoming paranoid about 'this world'," murmured McCoy.

"Can you blame him?" rasped Henderson. "Dr. Packard places much more value on life than on material gain."

The bruised and battered countenance of Dr. Packard filled the screen. The Lieutenant let out a startled cry and moved slightly closer to him. Packard was bleeding profusely; his eyes looked glazed; his voice trembled slightly, denoting anger and unreleased tension.

"17-6-05. They set upon me. I tried to sabotage their machines. They've kept me from the transmitter to prevent me sending for help. Ashman now has total control... They squabble and fight among themselves. They have wrecked my home and burned my notes - only this log is safe.

"The land bears scars, and with each passing day the robo-ships come nearer. They must be stopped. They must. Balance must be restored. They must be stopped."

With glaring eyes and twitching face he spat out his final words. "I will stop them. I WILL."

Then the screen went blank.

"If Dr. Packard's dates are correct that last entry was made twelve days ago," Kirk added to the silent audience.

Spock's puzzled face turned to his.

"What is it?"

"Permission to check something, Captain?"

A nod and he was gone, tricorder in hand. The party fell silent, thinking of the tapes.



A few minutes later Spock returned. "There is no sign of the widespread blasting Dr. Packard described. From the time of the sending of the distress signal to our arrival was 3.694 days. Although the plants on this planet have a rapid rate of growth, it is unlikely they could have covered such destruction."

"Dr. Packard is no liar - he's a fine man," Henderson retaliated.

"I am just stating the facts as they present themselves," Spock replied calmly. "Two more facts. There are no signs of radiation on this planet; and the more hostile of the Federation's adversaries are in quadrant 14 at the periphery of this galaxy. So no attack seems to have been made upon the settlers - unless it was a surprise attack."

"Spock, could this humanoid form we've been following be Packard?" Kirk asked.

"If it were Dr. Packard we should be picking up a positive life-form reading. The humanoid's readings are rare - they did not appear on the sensor sweep we made on the Enterprise - and when they do appear they are weak and fluctuating."

"Well," continued Captain Kirk, "the facts still remain, twenty people are missing; a distress signal was sent for some unexplained reason; one of our crew members is dead and his body missing; and a humanoid figure has been reported in the ruined town. We can't do anything tonight, so I suggest we take turns on lookout. Mr. Depaul, will you take the first watch, I will take the second in three hours time. Tomorrow we can start afresh, and we'd better start coming up with answers to these mysteries."

\* \* \*

Next morning Kirk decided the surrounding area must be searched. "Keep an eye out for this humanoid form, and keep your communicators handy. No-one is to do anything without direct orders from me. Understand?"

With nods and murmurs of acknowledgement the five scattered in different directions.

It was nearly half an hour later that Kirk's communicator gave out its familiar sound.

"Jim, McCoy here. I've just found the Photonic bore and phaser drill Packard mentioned. They're covered, as usual, in vegetation, and show signs of deterioration."

"Okay, Bones. Be right with you."

\* \* \*

Walking away from the machinery, Kirk turned to McCoy. "Well, at least one thing Dr. Packard talked of checks out."

"Yes, but they look as if they've been abandoned a lot longer than he stated. If his dates are right they were still in use twelve days ago, but look at them, Jim."

Kirk's communicator interrupted. "Depaul here, sir. I'm picking up a life-form reading quite near me."

Looking at his tricorder, "Yes, Mr. Depaul, I also have it, but very faintly."

"Permission to follow, sir?"

"No. It was that thing Voight was following when he died, and what you and Spock were following when Voight's body disappeared. I'm not risking anything. Wait there. We'll meet you and follow it together."

"But sir..."

"That's an order, Mr. Depaul."

\* \* \*



Depaul set his phaser on heavy stun.

\* \* \*

Kirk signalled Spock and Lt. Henderson.

\* \* \*

Following his readings, Depaul cautiously stalked the banks of the scarlet pond. Jan had been his friend. Captain Kirk didn't understand.

\* \* \*

"Spock, Kirk here." A glance at his tricorder confirmed that he still had the life-form reading.

"Yes, Captain?"

\* \* \*

The sloping bank of the pond was muddy. A footprint.

\* \* \*

"Mr. Depaul has picked up the life-form reading. Lock on. We will make our way to him."

\* \* \*

Kneeling, he studied the print. "Captain?"

"Yes, Depaul?"

"I've just discovered..."

A whiplash sound, followed by convulsive gurglings.

"Depaul? Depaul!"

\* \* \*

"Spock, Henderson, quickly!"

Kirk and McCoy broke into a run.

\* \* \*

Tighter, strangling tighter... down, down into cool, cool water... phaser... phaser... gone... slashing, contorting, jerking... must get free... water pounding... must stop strangler... hands reaching... nothing... pain... throbbing pain... water filling senses... must fight... must...

\* \* \*

The four met in a clearing.

"Listen."

Wild splashings came from behind a group of trees.

\* \* \*

Distorted images growing darker... no breath left... aching, tired limbs... numbness... eyes closing... No! No! NO!

\* \* \*

The large orange cloud hit them, scratching, tearing, beating, pecking. Enveloped, orange all around. Arms raised to defend against attackers. Eyes closed, hands thrashing wildly, hitting out. No defence.

"Phasers on stun, fire!" yelled Kirk, head bent, almost on one knee.

All four obeyed, shooting haphazardly, bodies twisted, beams of light shooting skyward. Seconds like hours, then silence.

Silence, and all around lay the small orange winged creatures. Those that escaped the beam flew off.

\* \* \*



Silence.

\* \* \*

"All reports show animals on this planet to be docile. This is the second attack by these 'docile' creatures."

\* \* \*

Silence.

No more splashing.

\* \* \*

"Someone or something tried to choke him to death, but he eventually died of drowning," McCoy said as he rose, tricorder in hand, from Depaul's limp body.

"If it hadn't been for those creatures we might have been in time," murmured Lt. Henderson wearily. Sinking onto a rock she gazed numbly at the corpse.

"I wonder what he was about to tell me?" queried Kirk, looking around the area where the body had been discovered.

The muddy bank now held the numerous footprints of the Enterprise crew.

\* \* \*

After a small service Kirk contacted the Enterprise, reporting this death but requiring no further assistance. Nothing new was reported by the ship.

\* \* \*

The four walked back to the settlement in silence, deep in thought. Only Lt. Henderson seemed active as she used her tricorder intermittently.

"Interesting..."

Attention slowly turned to her.

"What is it? You haven't stopped using that tricorder since we left Depaul's grave," Kirk said.

Henderson's face turned to his. "Ever since we arrived we have only been interested in Human life. The only other readings were taken to find out about the blasting. I've just taken a look at the plants and creatures we've been passing. Being a biologist it would naturally be more in my line, but until this moment I've been greatly distracted, what with looking for the settlers, and the two deaths.

"It seems that, so far, all the plants and creatures I've scanned are made up of a similar cell construction, each emitting some sort of energy."

Just as she finished speaking a small moan escaped from her lips. Sinking to her knees she fell face forward to the ground.

McCoy jumped forward to examine her. His worried face looked up. "She's been poisoned, Jim. It's similar to Phlexnaum poisoning. I can give her a shot of Kalium to slow it down, but I'll have to get her aboard the Enterprise fast if we're to save her."

"How did it happen, Bones?" asked Kirk as McCoy approached the woman with a freshly-filled hypo.

"There's a cut on the back of her right hand; it must have got in that way."

As Spock lifted Henderson and set off rapidly towards the shuttlecraft, Kirk looked around. The only thing that was near the Lieutenant at the time was a soft, red flower, wafting sweet scent at him, swaying languidly in the breeze.

\* \* \*



The sight stopped them in their tracks. Vines, lichen, thick roots, strangling the life out of the shuttlecraft.

"Intriguing - we only left the craft yesterday," Spock mused.

"We don't have a lot of time, Jim. She's sinking faster than I anticipated," McCoy announced, looking at his patient in Spock's arms.

"We'll have to blast them off." Kirk moved forward and fired.

"Do you think I would let you go now, gentlemen?"

The three spun round. "Packard!"

Standing several feet away was a form which had once been the man Dr. Victor Packard. Gone was the soft pinkish flesh and grey, windswept hair. Pale blue limbs protruded from his torn ochre-coloured coveralls; soft tints of red and purple streaked his hair, seemingly blending with the surrounding foliage. Alien fungi and thick mosses intermingled with the changed pigmentation of his new flesh, swelling and bursting through his uniform.

But the face of the man was the most startling. The eyes stared, unblinking, unmoving, in a corpse-like fashion. Most of the features were covered with lichen. The lips, now tinged blue, were slightly parted, and a reddish-orange liquid spat and dribbled continuously from them, dripping over the chin and hanging in dark strings down onto his chest. He made no gesture to wipe away this continuous vomit-like action.

The mouth parted. "Murderers... Butchers... Parasites of the universe..."

Packard's mouth opened and closed as the ominous statement was uttered, but seemed out of synchronisation with the words. Omnipotent, omnipresent, the voice completely surrounded the crewmen.

"Rapists... Always you take... sucking, devouring..."

"Jim, she hasn't got much time." McCoy's tense face looked up at him.

Spock turned, tricorder in hand. "Sir, the Being is also emitting the strange aura of enigmatic energy Lt. Henderson mentioned. It is mostly constructed of a cell pattern native to this planet. However, the Human element is still present and tends to fluctuate, giving off fleeting readings."

"The readings Voight and Depaul picked up?"

"It would seem so, Captain."

Packard moved forward, raising his hand. Kirk instinctively raised his phaser.

"Look... You mindlessly destroy all you do not comprehend. Greed and gain are man's traits. We do not need man; we can survive alone."

Kirk looked at Henderson's still body and, turning to Packard, opened his mouth to speak. But the voice boomed out.

"First you came with the crystal towers... Gouging... I gave warnings... for years I gave warnings... then I made the towers go away, and they became me.

"Then the second cancer came. Only Packard cared. Only Packard knew."

"He talks as if he isn't Packard, as if Packard's a separate entity!" ejaculated McCoy.

"They brought the burning light... cutting... Ohhhh!.... Burn... burning... Only Packard cared, only Packard knew... Now they are gone... only Packard is one with me... Now you... All cancer must be destroyed... no more hurt..."

"Complete absorption, Captain. The Ze-nark of Onexion IV protects its young from predators by a mental and physical union with it. In a similar way Dr. Packard's mind and body are being absorbed and replaced by the planet.







This whole planet is a living being, with every separate particle on it making up the whole. Packard is becoming part of this world. We are not, and are therefore alien to it. Just as a Human being rejects foreign bodies and destroys them, this planet is rejecting us and will try to destroy us."

"Jim."

Kirk faced McCoy, who had risen to his feet.

"She's dead," the doctor murmured.

Kirk turned viciously. "Have you no regard for any life but your own?" he shouted.

"You and your kind should ask the same question."

Suddenly McCoy grabbed Kirk's arm as roots shot up, coiling around the Lieutenant. Within seconds the body was encased in a cocoon of roots, moss and grasses. Just as rapidly they disappeared, leaving an empty space where the woman had lain.

"Fascinating. Complete decomposition within seconds. I assume the same must have taken place with Mr. Veight, the colonists, and the occupants of the city. I would not have believed it could be accomplished at such great speed."

McCoy shot Spock an angry glance.

"Man's only purpose." Packard's hand gestured towards the spot where, only two minutes before, Henderson had lain. "You do not frighten me, you cannot defeat me; my might can crush you. I will show you you cannot win."

Packard raised his arm. The sky became overcast, clouds stirred, swirling, moving with a purpose. A wind rose, buffeting and unsettling the three men.

"Stop, Packard!" Kirk's voice raised slightly to be heard above the wind. "Killing us will not stop others. You will only do yourself more harm."

Packard remained unmoved as a bolt of green energy forked the sky.

Kirk flashed a look of alarm upwards. "Man can live in harmony... Other planets have..."

His voice was drowned by the deafening roar of thunder that followed a second bolt of energy. Kirk reached for his communicator, but received an unfriendly crackling sound on opening it.

Suddenly torrents of rain, pounding, emptying the heavens, like a continuous sheet, hammering, bending all in its path. The three fought against its onslaught, as wind and rain smashed them to the ground. Supreme effort brought Kirk's face up to look at Packard. Packard, untouched by either elements or pity. Rain bombarded Kirk's senses, eyes blinded, throat choking out the words he had to say. He had to make this planet listen.

"Man... Men have saved planets, saved whole galaxies..." he spluttered, before wind and rain combined to silence him.

Another blaze of colour filled the sky... then... tremors... the ground beneath their boots shook, strained, gave a cry, and split into a yawning chasm.

Kirk's eyes shot down. McCoy! The doctor spun as the ground beneath him opened, falling. A quick movement... a hand... the Vulcan had him, pulling him out of the fissure to stand on 'safe' ground again.

There was very little time. A last attempt. Kirk let drop the phaser he held - it was useless, even if he wanted to use it. Gasping, he raised an arm.

"Only by letting us go can you be sure of peace. We never meant you harm."  
//Listen. Please listen!//

Suddenly the voice echoed all around them, rising above the storm. "Only if this can be proven will you go free."

Kirk sank to both knees, eyes closed, defeated. How could he? What proof



could he offer? The storm continued for a further minute before Spock announced the solution.

"A mind meld, Captain."

The storm began to die down. The planet's interest had been captured.

"A mind meld?"

Spock rose to face Packard, his hair flat against his face, his clothes wrinkled, tight, heavy with moisture.

"It is a process by which our minds will become one. Your mind to my mind, my mind to your mind. I will use Packard to contact you. You may look into my mind and see that we speak the truth."

"I have already seen into Packard's mind. Man is greedy, destructive. This I already know. Packard has told me of your greed."

"Dr. Packard has become obsessed with this planet. He hated what a small section of men were doing to it - to you. Due to the strain his mind has become unbalanced; he distorts due to this, and is therefore unreliable. By using me you will see the truth."

Second followed taut second... the storm continued... time stood still as the planet thought over the proposal. Tension surged through the crewmen's bodies as they waited for the sentence of their judge, jury and executioner.

"Proceed." The storm had gone.

The saturated form of Spock moved forward. Two steps, and McCoy was at his side.

"Spock, have you realised this is a whole planet you're trying to meld with? It could be too powerful for you." The concerned countenance looked up at its friendly sparring partner.

A quiet tone made the reply. "Thank you for your concern, Doctor, but I have already calculated my chances of survival, and although they are low, where even death or brain damage could occur, it is the only logical course of action."

"Damn your logic, Spock!" McCoy spat, worried eyes underlying his angry reply... betraying.

Kirk moved forward. "This wasn't what I meant. Surely there must be some other way! Think, Spock... think."

"None, Captain. It must be done, and done immediately. Packard still has Human elements left in him, his mind can still be infiltrated, communication is possible. However, if this opportunity is missed, not only we, but others from the Enterprise and any who follow, are doomed."

In a last desperate attempt to help his friend, Kirk again opened his communicator.

"They will not work here, Captain, until I wish it," resounded the voice.

With lowered eyes Kirk nodded to Spock, who handed him tricorder, phaser and communicator before moving forward towards Packard.

His long sinewy fingers reached for the doctor's face. With eyes closed, a silence followed as Spock assumed a trance-like condition. Peace for a moment. Then Spock's body stiffened, contorted, jerking in a whip-like fashion.

Kirk and McCoy rigid, trembling slightly, great restraint preventing them from running forward.

Spock writhed, stiffened, then writhed again, head flung back, face twisting, mouth opening and closing, flesh pulled tightly across a ghastly face, small whimpering sounds emanating from a body racked with pain. Suddenly his body was suspended, motionless, held, then, like a rag doll, fell relaxed to the ground.



Turning, Packard disappeared in a group of trees; the vines released their grip of the shuttlecraft. All was still.

"How is he, Bones?" Kirk's hand raised his First Officer's head slightly.

"Alive, but in a pretty bad state. Pass me my medi-kit. I'll give him a stimulant to help him until we can get him on board the Enterprise, then let's get the hell out of here!"

\* \* \*

The two men at the controls were slightly startled by the figure behind them.

"Spock! How are you?"

"Fully recovered, thank you, Doctor."

Instantly McCoy scanned Spock. "No brain damage and, apart from a few cuts and bruises, you're as fit as any Vulcan can be. But tell me..." A glint appeared in the doctor's eyes. "How did you manage to miscalculate so badly? According to your estimates there was very little hope for you. It couldn't be you're slipping?"

Spock, raising an eyebrow, answered in his usual cool tone. "It seems my calculations were in error, Doctor. By going through Dr. Packard the intensity of the planet's mind was channelled, and therefore greatly reduced. Even so, it was overpowering, thus my unconscious state it its close."

Kirk smiled and asked, "While in contact with the planet, did you learn anything?"

"Yes, Captain." Taking a seat. "It would seem that the planet had, for many years, been quite willing to share itself, to allow others to come to live on it. Apparently the settlers were the second to colonise the planet, but both they and the first people had one thing in common - they tried to exploit its mineral deposits. This the planet objected to. It was being destroyed, and only took action to save itself. It gave no indication as to whether further colonisation would be possible. However, it did free us, therefore communication at a later date, under different conditions, may be feasible."

"Tell me, Spock, have you any idea of the origins of the first colonisation?" McCoy asked.

"That is unknown, but they must have been an advanced form of civilisation to be using space travel. It is only speculation, but they may have travelled from a nearby planet when their world was dying. Space travel has been used at various times to escape a dying world. And escape has occasionally seemed preferable to sorting out the problems of that world."

Kirk's voice filled with concern. "What will happen to Victor Packard now?"

"It seems that Dr. Packard not only agreed to his transformation, but encouraged and looked forward to it. He had become so obsessed with the planet, he wanted to become one with it. He will probably live out his days as the planet's sentinel, tending it, protecting it, becoming part of the whole of a highly intelligent being."

Rising, he assumed Dr. McCoy's position at the controls, while Kirk contacted the Enterprise.

"Good to hear from you again, Captain," the Scottish voice cheerfully proclaimed. "Sensor sweeps recorded a bad storm on the surface of the planet just a short while ago, but atmospheric conditions prevented us contacting you. We were preparing to take the other shuttlecraft down as the transporter is still too risky to use. Glad you're all right, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Scott, it's good to be coming home. Prepare to receive shuttlecraft."

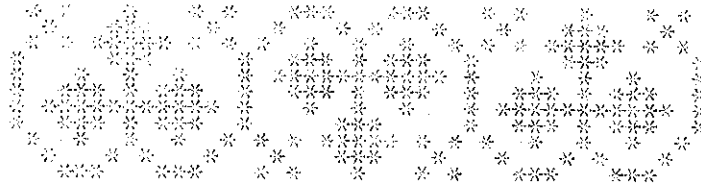
"Yes, sir."



"Oh! And, Lieutenant Uhura..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Open a line to Starfleet Command. I have an important message to relay to them."



#### THOLIAN WEBB

I had never felt such pain  
As that which pervaded my very soul  
As I performed the service in his memory,  
Even though I knew him not to be dead.

How could I explain how I knew?  
I - the unemotional Vulcan.  
He, who denied all feelings...  
I could FEEL Jim's living spirit close by!

The words came, but at a price.  
My heart ached with helplessness,  
And I fought against external influences,  
Until McCoy broke through my shields...

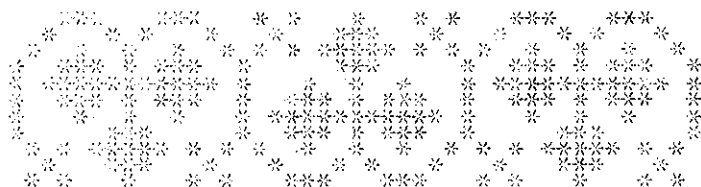
He has a talent for reducing me to basics  
Which even I do not understand.  
He manipulates until you reveal all -  
Or else you put up barbed logic as protection...

Last orders... Harsh words, followed by kind ones,  
And HIS face upon the screen.  
The sight of him chipped away at the walls  
I had erected - Barbed logic blunted.

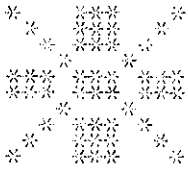
Acceptance came finally from McCoy and the others,  
But it was too late then to help,  
When I so needed help to carry on.  
I had never thought redundancy possible...

Eventually I was proven correct,  
And we rescued him from the brink of death.  
My life could now carry on, with him at my side...  
Knowing that he would understand -- and accept... me.

Karen Hayden



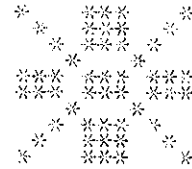




## GATEWAY INTO HOPE

by

Vicki Richards



The jewelled blackness lay before her eyes; the stars flew past in beauty as she watched, and for a moment the pain in Siarn Wyn's tormented soul was eased as she willingly lost herself in the vast grandeur of the universe.

But such moments of peace - no, not peace, she corrected herself; moments of respite - could not last, she knew. They never did last; in recent years such moments had become so fleeting that she had begun to suspect that one day would come a time, a terrible time, when they would come no more, and she would have no rest; no rest for her weary soul throughout eternity.

When first she had seen that the world, the universe, was not as it seemed, forever losing her childhood in that instant of sudden knowledge, she had tried to hide; from herself, from the things that she knew, to somehow make the world as it had been. But she could not. She knew, and childhood and peace had forever been lost to her.

She turned away from the observation port with a sigh of resignation. No matter what momentary comfort she might derive from the sight of a million stars, she would only be fooling herself if she thought that there was any hope left for her in the universe. From that time as a child, when people had begun to shun the little one with the brilliant mind and the terrifying wisdom, she had known in the depths of her being that there was no hope left for her. For a while - years - her family had tried to understand and help her, but in the end even her parents had given up. She did not blame them; she blamed nobody. How could ordinary people deal with or understand a child who seemed so strange? She couldn't even deal with it herself.

The doctors on her home world of Tris had finally washed their hands of her; they couldn't categorise, let alone cure, a person whose symptoms were those of a brilliant intellect and the sorrow that came with the unwanted ability to half-understand the mysteries of the universe.

The shuttle carrying her to her fate sped on. She estimated it would rendezvous with the Starship in 2.857 standard Trisian hours, then converted it to Terran standard of 2.315 with hardly a second's thought.

The rehabilitation colony on Sirius B3 would provide no answers, she knew. Her years of roaming the galaxy, once she had reached an age where she was considered old enough to be responsible for her own destiny, had provided her with much knowledge, but no answers. Over the years there had been glimpses, fragments of answers, but the times when she had thought that she might at last find her way, find an end to her torment, and find the purpose for which she had been created, were long gone. Perhaps they never had been. She only knew that the destination the Starship would take her to would provide no answers either; only a long exile, ended by death.

\* \* \*

Supposedly incurable cases always made Leonard McCoy feel three things. Firstly, he felt a sense of sorrow that in the times he lived in there were still such things as incurable cases, however rare. Secondly, he would begin to wonder if the incurable case really was incurable. And thirdly, he would be filled with a quiet (and sometimes not so quiet) determination that if there was a cure, then he was going to find it.

Five of the six patients being carried towards the Enterprise at that moment were straightforward rehabilitation cases; six months on Sirius B3 and they would be readjusted well enough to return to their daily lives. The great strides made in psychotherapy over the last century were a great vindication of the researches carried out by his colleagues in the medical profession, and he was always very gratified to read of the successes on Sirius B3 in his medical journals.



But the sixth case - she was a different matter. One of those incurable cases, according to her file. Well, McCoy planned to see about that. It would take them a good three weeks to reach the Sirius system; the Enterprise had other business en route. A busy Starship could not afford to make bad use of her time, and McCoy knew that Jim had received orders to drop off mining supplies at a colony in the Orion region. He also had orders to pick up a collection of diplomats for delivery to Starbase 8. For once McCoy would not grumble at the delay; he would use those three weeks to the best advantage, and he would just see if an old country doctor couldn't do anything to help the poor Trisian girl.

McCoy laid the files on his desk, checked with Christine that the preparations for their charges were almost completed, then left Sickbay for the science section's main lab. He wanted to find Spock and enlist his aid. As much as the Vulcan said he would never understand Human mental attitudes and emotions, McCoy knew full well that if anyone on the Enterprise understood the workings of the mind as well as her Chief Medical Officer, it was her Science Officer.

Spock was in the lab, his face buried in a viewer, but he sensed McCoy's approach, and turned.

"Yes, Doctor? You wanted me?"

"Yes, Spock." McCoy seated himself on a handy stool. "I need your help."

"Indeed?"

"With one of the patients we're to ferry to Sirius B3, Spock. She's a Trisian, hyperintelligent, with personality difficulties. Apparently her troubles stem from her intelligence. You know the old adage about there being a very fine line between genius and insanity. But you would probably find this case interesting. According to her case notes, the girl believes she understands some of what are called 'the mysteries of the universe'. And it's broken her mind."

"I would have thought," replied Spock, turning off the viewer, "that such a case merited sympathy as well as interest. How can I help?"

"Like you've helped me before," said McCoy, a little surprised at Spock's openness. "Vulcan mental disciplines can be very effective in treating mental disorders. Perhaps Trisians can be helped in that way; they are an intelligent race, and after all, you have managed to help some Humans."

"Some Humans are more intelligent than others," Spock replied with just enough gravity to prevent McCoy from knowing for certain if he was indulging in the Human custom of repartee. "But I will gladly help if you feel I can be of use. The shuttle is due to dock with the Enterprise in 1.269 hours, I believe. Perhaps I should see the case notes."

"They're in my office, Spock. I've left them out for you."

The Doctor and the Science Officer left for Sickbay. None of the science personnel who had witnessed the exchange took the slightest notice of the apparent verbal truce between the two; no-one who knew them would be surprised by the immediate cessation of their eternal feud when the occasion to help another arose. Besides, anyone who had more than a passing acquaintance with the two knew very well how much real affection was between the Enterprise's Chief Medical Officer and her Science Officer, despite what outward appearance might suggest.

\* \* \*

The shuttle was docking with the great Starship; it was in the act of performing its majestic roll-over before actual contact was made. Siarn could sense it, despite the shuttle's stabilisers. She had experienced another fleeting moment of hope - no, more than that... wonder - when she had first caught a fleeting glimpse of the silver ship through the shuttle's observation port. The Starship was indeed beautiful; she could still appreciate that, despite her problems. Even in her eternal despair she could appreciate the



majesty of the great ship hanging there amidst the beauty of the universe, a tribute to the tenacity and forward drive of not just one race, but many. Then as always came the thought that it was all for nothing, and all hope left her.

The docking procedure was completed, and the Captain of the shuttle announced over the communications system that they could now transfer to the Enterprise. Once that name would have filled her with interest; the U.S.S. Enterprise, most famous of all the heavy cruisers of Starfleet. Once she would have known a sense of honour, and even a small amount of delight at the thought of travelling on so famous a ship, even more at meeting her crew - such people they were reported to be! But now, although she still appreciated the honour, if only in an abstract way, she had lost all ability to enjoy anything, and shambled forward towards the airlock with the other five lost souls.

\* \* \*

Their quarters in the ship's Sickbay were comfortable enough; not that Siarn Wyn cared anything for comfort. She answered the medical staff's questions in a low, sad voice, speaking only when she had to. It would be better for them to spend their time on the others; lost souls, she had called them, but in truth they were not as lost as she, for after a few months on Sirius B3 they would be cured, and would return to their home planets to take up their lives again - for all the good that would do them. No; let the medical men and women use their time on caring for the others. After all, though they could not understand it, she was not ill. She had no disease. She just knew.

Another man in medical uniform arrived; from the respect awarded him, Siarn Wyn assumed he was Dr Leonard McCoy, the Enterprise's Chief Medical Officer. She knew all their names, all the famous ones. In the long-ago days when she had still had a little hope, she had followed all news reports of Starfleet's activities avidly, and the Enterprise had figured high upon her list of attention. In those days it had seemed to her that what hope there still was lay in those who travelled between the stars, and that which they tried to accomplish.

But no more. There was no hope for anyone. As a child it had been revealed to her, in such clarity that she could not deny it. There was no hope because it would all end; they would all die, all of them; all races, all hope. No point in advancing, in trying.

Oh, she understood it all; she understood the ways of a thousand different peoples, their histories, their achievements. She knew the mathematical equations for practically everything. There was no knowledge she could not assimilate. Over the years she had learned much; so much. But for what? Ever since that day when knowledge had been given to her, on that day when she had wandered into the dark cave near her childhood home, she had known the answers to things which puzzled the whole universe.

During her years of wandering she had held many jobs, and the people she had worked with had been first surprised, then amazed, then slightly afraid of the things she knew. Once, she had worked in a Federation outpost as a science technician; when her superiors had discovered her calculations on the computer, they had confronted her with a mixture of disbelief and horror. She had calculated not only the date on which the universe began, but also the date on which it would end. Also the date of her own death, and those of her colleagues. Also an equation which went a long way to explain the purpose of life in the galaxy; it was incomplete, but pointed to a depressing conclusion.

No wonder she had been asked to leave; she understood they would not wish to become as she, and it had never been her intention that anyone else should see those equations; it had been the merest accident that Dr. T'Dorm had discovered them before she had had the chance to erase them. To have such knowledge meant to lose hope; she was not surprised they had refused to believe her.

"Siarn Wyn, isn't it?" the Chief Medical Officer was saying.



She nodded silently. He had a kind face, and smiling blue eyes, but she knew he was wasting his time if he thought he could help.

"Will you answer my questions frankly?" asked McCoy, sensing that this melancholy girl would respond to a direct appeal more than she would to the best bedside manner.

"If you want me to." The Trisian girl's voice was low and soft, but held a deep sorrow. So did her dark eyes; McCoy was suddenly filled with a great sense of grief that so beautiful a girl should be so condemned. He had to do something.

McCoy smiled again, then sat down by her and took her hand. She looked at him oddly, almost in the way a Vulcan might have done, but she did not take it away.

"Then," he said kindly, patting her hand in a fatherly manner, "we had better talk."

\* \* \*

"You're sure it's wise to allow this girl to roam round the ship, Bones?" Jim Kirk did trust McCoy's judgement, naturally, but he had to confess to a small amount of concern. No-one was sent to Sirius B3 unless they really were ill.

"The only person Siarn Wyn is ever likely to harm is herself, Jim," McCoy replied gently; he knew the depths of his friend's concern for his crew. "Put you haven't met her yet. If you had, you wouldn't be asking me. She's a very gentle person, and very, very clever. An I.Q. almost as high as Spock's; but she's totally without hope, and I haven't been able to find out why."

"Without hope?" Kirk looked at McCoy closely; he could see that Bones really was worried about the girl. Was her illness so terrible-

McCoy nodded, considering how best to explain what he didn't really understand himself. "She's in total despair, Jim; has been for years. Yet in many ways she's as sane as you or I. That's the depressing part; she has a brilliant intellect, but she seems to believe she's been given some knowledge that sets her apart. Something to do with knowing when everything's going to end - and everybody, if the information I got from the outpost she served with on Deneb VI is right.

"I couldn't really get a lot of sense out of her. It was as if she thought I couldn't help her, and wouldn't waste my time by talking much. But Jim... she really is a sad case. Totally without hope, and without any motivation at all. It's got to the stage where it's affecting her health. In my opinion, if she doesn't get any help, she'll be dead within a year.

"This isn't just chronic depression, Jim; it's far, far worse. I said she could look round the ship because I thought it might take her mind off things for a while. Do you want me to find her and take her back to Sickbay?"

"No, Bones. Let the poor girl look around as much as she wants."

\* \* \*

Spock went into the lab to find a strange female at the main computer. She didn't seem to notice as he silently walked up behind her. Since she was clearly not a member of the crew, and only one of the six patients under McCoy's care had permission to leave Sickbay, he knew she must be Siarn Wyn, the Trisian McCoy had spoken of. She appeared to be studying; he leaned slightly forward and saw that she was displaying data at a fantastic rate - if she was assimilating it, then she must indeed be brilliant.

It was then that she noticed him. "Oh. You must be Mr. Spock," she said quietly, in a tone of apology. "I hope you don't mind my using the computer. Dr. McCoy said I could do what I wanted to; perhaps I interpreted him a little too literally."



"I do not object," replied the Vulcan, "since you clearly know how to operate it. You seemed to be studying; is there anything in particular you wish to know?"

She had not touched him, but Spock was experiencing definite telepathic impressions from her. Disturbing impressions of sadness, hopelessness - all the things McCoy had told him about her. But they were so strong; her presence was making him uncomfortable, though she could not help that. And he had promised to help McCoy with her case if he could; to do that he had to talk to her; therefore it was logical to start as soon as possible.

"Oh," she said, looking slightly embarrassed, the first change of expression, however slight, that Spock had noticed. "I wanted to learn anything your computer could teach me. I just started at A and went onwards, if you know what I mean. I have this need to learn everything I can," she finished, as if apologising again.

But Spock was impressed. "The pursuit of knowledge is a laudable occupation. May I be of assistance?"

"I..." Siarn Wyn didn't know what to say. She knew of the Vulcan, and was grateful for the unexpected kindness he had shown to someone he had found tampering with his computer. Others perhaps would not have been so kind. She would have liked to talk to such a one as he; they would be able to speak on the same level, and he would understand things those with lesser brains could not. But what was the use of it? There was no use in anything.

"Thank you, but I must go now. Perhaps we could talk another time." The Trisian turned and left the lab, leaving a very thoughtful Vulcan behind.

She was too beautiful and clever to be so sad, he found himself thinking; then immediately realised he should not be experiencing such thoughts. Trisians were not supposed to be telepathic. Yet she did have a strange effect on him. He must talk to McCoy again about her; they must try and find a way to cure her inexplicable illness that caused her so much sorrow. Such an intellect should not go to waste.

\* \* \*

McCoy had tried everything he knew; all forms of hypnosis, brain scans, truth drugs; everything. He had not found an answer, but he had found out something others had not - Siarn Wyn had some kind of block in her mind, a block which prevented her from remembering several hours on the day her illness had first begun. She was convinced that she did not have an illness, but McCoy now thought she definitely had; something had happened on that day in her childhood to twist all her future life. They had to find out how it had happened, and then - hopefully - look for a cure. The other five patients were already responding well to treatment; McCoy had no qualms about leaving Christine to watch over them; but Siarn Wyn he meant to treat himself, with Spock's aid, and that was why the Vulcan was on his way to Sickbay.

"Bones thinks this will work?" Jim Kirk asked his First Officer as the two of them walked down the corridor towards Sickbay.

"Dr. McCoy believes I may be able at least to discover what caused Siarn Wyn's condition," Spock replied. "Which is why he has asked me to meld with her."

Both of them knew McCoy would not have made such a request of Spock if there had been any other way, but melding did seem to be the only way left open to them of discovering what was actually wrong with the girl. Kirk had asked to go along, concerned at what effect melding with so disturbed a mind and so strong a personality would have on his friend; a mind meld was never entirely free of risk, especially in such circumstances.

And Spock had been glad he had asked to accompany him, though naturally he had not said so. Though intrigued by the Trisian girl, he found her presence rather uncomfortable; she did broadcast such strong emotions, and



seemed totally unable to prevent herself from doing so, notwithstanding the large amount of mental control she continually exercised. Spock was impressed with the way she did control her seething emotions; a weaker person would have succumbed to the effects of such an illness years ago. He hoped he could help her; she was too intelligent and too good a person to have to live in continual torment. Yet he was not looking forward to the meld; all in all, he would be relieved when it was over, and was indeed glad that both Jim and McCoy would be there.

"So there you are - I was beginning to think you weren't coming!" McCoy greeted them cheerfully as they entered Sickbay. Siarn Wyn also greeted them, but only with a subdued nod of her head; part of her was afraid of melding with Spock - she was afraid of somehow hurting him. Yet she knew she had to, if only to satisfy McCoy, and the doctor had been very good to her these past few days on the Enterprise.

They went through to a private room, and without further waste of time the Trisian sat on a bed, Spock taking a seat beside her. She looked up at him, sadly, then closed her eyes as he reached for her face to find the position for the mind meld.

Even then he was not prepared for the strength of her personality, nor for the power of the emotions that assailed him - despair, deep and dreadful. Quickly he went through the mental disciplines, forcing the unsettling, overpowering emotions out, concentrating only on finding the area of her mind that was blocked even to the girl herself.

He knew he would not be able to meld with her for long without receiving some kind of mental damage himself; he had to find what he was looking for quickly. He searched for, and found, that part of her mind which held the memories of her childhood. Then he found it - a blank space where a memory should have been. It was not easy to break through the long-constructed barriers, but he did.

.....There was a cave in front of her; a dark place she had been forbidden to explore, but a place she could no longer keep away from. The temptation for adventure and to find out something new was too strong for her to resist. She entered. It was dark, but she still went further in, almost as if drawn by something. In the pitch blackness she found a passage at the rear of the cave. Then she heard a noise which made her want to turn and run home. But she could not. Something held her in its power, and drew her on. She could hear it breathing; it was right in front of her... it was in her mind.....

Spock was deep in the mind meld; too deep, Kirk thought. He and McCoy watched anxiously as Spock tried to break the barriers in the Trisian girl's mind that McCoy's expertise could not.

They watched in concern as a whole range of alien emotions flitted across the Vulcan's face. Jim didn't like it; he could sense that something was going wrong. Then Spock moaned softly.

That did it! Kirk reached out to shake his friend by the shoulder, and McCoy didn't try to stop him. They had to bring Spock out of it.

The meld had suddenly grown too deep, and Spock was struggling to come out of it. Siarn Wyn's personality was strong of itself, but the illness which had assailed it had made it even stronger. The terrible despair inflicted on the girl threatened to overwhelm him too. He had to break the meld.

But the alien creature which had inflicted the torment on her had also implanted a defence mechanism against telepathic interference. Spock fought against the power which tried to entrap him also, using every ounce of his will to resist being overcome by it. If he did not, both he and Siarn Wyn would be joined forever in complete madness.

With all his strength, in one last, desperate effort, he sought to break the meld, then found he was being helped. The gentle shaking gave him just the



extra stimulus he needed to break free. Suddenly he was out of it; he took his hands from the girl's face and sat back, resolutely refusing to shudder.

Jim's hand was still on his shoulder, and McCoy was hovering about him with his ever-present scanner. He knew he must look pale and weakened, but he knew also that he had escaped without permanent damage. It had been close...

"Thank you," he said quietly to Kirk when he could.

McCoy gave a grunt, as if satisfied that he was unharmed, then quickly turned to scanning the girl.

"Is she all right?" Kirk asked, now he was able to think of something other than Spock's safety. The girl sat quietly, head down. Then he realised she was crying.

He was about to try and comfort her, but before he could move McCoy had sedated her with his hypospray, and had eased her into a lying position.

"Is she okay, Bones?" Kirk repeated his question.

"As okay as she'll ever be, unless Spock has found out something to help us," McCoy answered grimly. "But I think the meld has caused her illness to worsen. I'll let her sleep for a few hours, and hope she doesn't dream."

"How about Spock?" asked Kirk anxiously. "If it's affected her so badly..."

"I assure you I am fine, Jim," Spock interrupted, "although if you had not intervened it is possible I would have been unable to break free."

"But I did discover what caused her to become as she is. When she was still a child she stumbled across a malignant entity which had sought refuge on Tris, in a cave near her home. An entity similar to one we have encountered before, but this one, instead of feeding off fear, fed by causing despair and hopelessness in those it infected."

"Then it's in her now?" Kirk couldn't stop himself from staring uneasily at the sleeping form of Siarn Wyn.

Spock shook his head. "No. This entity is of a type that leaves its victims immediately after infection. It probably gained enough strength from the encounter to enable it to leave Tris. Though I doubt it would have managed to reach its next destination - the entity was growing old. Even though its life-span was probably several centuries, Siarn Wyn was probably its last victim. It would have perished in the interstellar void."

"It was still strong enough to do her considerable damage," McCoy remarked wryly, "and it almost had you, too - years later! And there could be more of them somewhere."

"Yes, Doctor," Spock agreed soberly. "There could."

Although his own escape had been narrow, the Vulcan's first concern was for the Trisian girl. The meld had shown him much of what she was, and what she could have been had not the alien entity infected her. She had an incredible intellect; she could have contributed so much.

And he still could not help her. He might have discovered what had caused her suffering, but now he had to tell McCoy that here was a case that was truly incurable; from what he had seen, nothing in the galaxy could release Siarn Wyn from her torment.

\* \* \*

The Enterprise had just gone into parking orbit around mining colony M984. Her Captain sat in his command chair, thoughtfully rubbing his chin. Kirk found the Trisian girl's plight continually preying on his mind, especially as her affliction seemed to be having some sort of effect on Spock.

He knew McCoy had asked the Vulcan's help with the case, but now they had discovered that there was nothing Vulcan mental techniques - or anything, for



that matter - could do for her, he would have expected Spock to have put it all to the back of his mind. Not that anything on the surface would indicate Spock was concerned about something; his work was naturally as impeccable as ever. No-one but Kirk would have seen how Spock was affected by the girl. Perhaps it was something to do with the meld that had so nearly gone very wrong. And worst of all, Spock didn't seem to want to talk about it.

His thoughts were interrupted by a bleeping from Uhura's communications console, about half a second before he was about to order her to make contact with the mining authorities.

"I'm receiving a distress call from the mining colony, Captain," Uhura reported. "They're requesting that a Security team and medical aid be beamed down immediately. That's all they'll say."

Kirk frowned involuntarily. What now? "Tell them we'll be down right away, Lieutenant. Have a Security team, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Spock meet me in the transporter room immediately."

\* \* \*

"What's all this about, Jim?" McCoy asked in a rather irritated manner. He disliked having his molecules scrambled at such short notice, especially as he didn't have the faintest idea why they had been suddenly called down to the surface.

Kirk surveyed the walls of the mining installation around him. He was surprised no-one was there to meet them. "Sorry there was no time to explain, Bones, but we had a distress call. Seems like they've had some kind of emergency down here."

A man in dark blue overalls suddenly appeared. He looked as if he'd been running. "Ah, Captain; thank heavens you're here!" The man was gasping for breath. "We've got real trouble here. Three of my men seem to have lost their minds completely, and two more are dead. There's something in the lower levels, and we don't know what it is. Your men will need those phasers."

The three Enterprise officers looked at one another; the mine manager's warning sounded somewhat ominous.

McCoy knew it was ominous when fifteen minutes later they found themselves in the dimly-lit lower levels of the mining colony. His rapid examination of the injured miners had shown that they had indeed been subjected to massive mental trauma, but he thought they would recover. The two dead men appeared to have been killed because they had suffered greater exposure to whatever had caused the others' condition. And now there they were, searching the deepest part of the mine for whatever had attacked them.

The Security team had gone in the opposite direction to search. Kirk, Spock and McCoy, however, headed in the direction where the men were supposed to have been working immediately prior to the attack. They had walked no further than a few hundred yards when Spock suddenly stopped.

"What is it, Spock?" asked Kirk.

The Vulcan was intent on his tricorder readings. Then he looked up, a strange expression on his face; one that Kirk had seen before.

"You can sense something nearby?"

Spock nodded. "Yes, Jim. A fascinating phenomenon; the readings are confused, but they seem to suggest that nearby is another of the passageways which connect this universe to another."

"You mean like that time with Lazarus?" McCoy was horrified; Spock's bombshell was enough to make him want to leave that mine, that planet, that moment! He looked around nervously, as if expecting the universe itself to dissolve around him - which, on the previous occasion they had encountered such a passageway, it almost had done.



"Then the same hazards we met before also apply here?" Kirk knew Spock would never have said what he had were he not completely sure of his facts, no matter what he said about confused readings.

"I believe so," the Vulcan replied. "But there is something extremely odd about this 'gateway'. I can sense the presence of this one - as if I am receiving telepathic emanations from it. I shall have to get closer to it before I can discover more."

Kirk and McCoy followed Spock closely down the tunnel. They had all seen the effects exposure to the passageway had had on the miners, and were unwilling to allow Spock to risk such danger to himself; certainly, they meant to make sure they were there to help.

So the delivery of supplies had turned into something far more serious. Kirk could only hope that Spock would find the answer; would find out what had caused the passageway to open; and, more importantly, how to close it again.

The tunnel twisted and turned, following the underground seams of the minerals the colony supplied to the Federation. Kirk watched his friend's face anxiously, knowing by the Vulcan's intent look that the passageway was somewhere very near. They rounded a corner, where Spock halted, and stopped them both.

"To approach further would involve extreme danger," he told them quietly. "We must stay here until I have ascertained what we must do."

"I know what has to be done," said a strange but familiar voice from behind them.

The two Humans whirled; Spock turned more slowly. He already knew who it was. Just at that moment Kirk's communicator bleeped, and Montgomery Scott's tones filled the dark tunnel, hurriedly informing that Captain of how 'that crazy Trisian stunned Kyle and beamed herself down.'

"Well?" asked Kirk sternly, closing the communicator. "There is great danger here," he added more gently, remembering that the girl could not help her affliction.

"There is danger for you," replied Siarn Wyn, "but not for me. Can't you sense it?" She turned to Spock, an odd expression on her beautiful features. Spock realised then what it was : hope.

"I sense the gateway to another universe," he replied quietly, "but I see you sense more."

Then without an invitation she crossed the tunnel to where the Vulcan stood and reached up to his face, seeking the position for the meld. Kirk made as if to stop her, but found McCoy restraining him; Spock clearly did not object.

And despite Kirk's fears, this time nothing happened to suggest that Spock was in any danger from the Trisian's mind. They stood there for a few moments in silence, then Spock reached up and gently took her hands from his face.

"I understand," he said simply. Then he turned to Kirk. "Jim - I can't explain fully, there isn't time," said the Vulcan quickly, "but Siarn has to go through the gateway."

"What?" Kirk was horrified. "She'll be killed!"

Spock shook his head. "No. It may save her. I told you I was receiving definite telepathic emanations from the passageway; Siarn Wyn received more. Enough to call her down from the Enterprise."

"Through there are my answers, Captain Kirk," said the Trisian in a clear, calm voice, taking up the explanation. "There is no hope for me in this universe; Mr. Spock has told me why I am like this, but that does not help me. I believe that if I cross this threshold I may be changed, but I will find



answers. I can sense it. And then, perhaps, the passageway which has opened will close again, and this universe will be safe. I must try to do this, and even if I do not succeed, I shall be glad to sacrifice myself in trying. At least it will have given me a purpose."

"But why should it be you, Siarn?" asked McCoy, wanting to stop her but not knowing if he should. "Why should you be called here, of all people? Couldn't you be wrong?"

"I don't think so, Dr. McCoy," replied the girl, really smiling for the first time in a very long while. "I know I am right. And why not me? Do you know - I think that today I finally discovered I believe in destiny?"

She said no more, knowing they would not try to stop her. With a special smile at Spock she began to walk towards the place where the universes joined.

She stepped through without a moment's hesitation. To the three who watched it was as if her figure was suddenly outlined with a soft blue light, which grew in intensity as they watched. Unable to take their eyes away, they looked on as she seemed to change subtly, somehow to grow into something new, a new being with a new wisdom, yet still Siarn Wyn.

The light grew so bright they had to shield their eyes in order to see. Spock checked his tricorder; the readings were right off the scale. Yet he could sense within him that though the power in the passageway held a destructive potential far greater than a hundred Starships, they - and the universe - were in danger no longer. Siarn Wyn had entered the other universe, had joined with it. She would be with them for only a few seconds longer.

"Friends!" came the Trisian's voice suddenly, unexpectedly; not from the place where she seemed to stand, but echoing all around them. It was her voice, yet it was different - more resonant, as if it spoke inside their minds.

"Friends!" she said again, "I was wrong! So wrong! There is hope - hope in everything! I had such knowledge, but I interpreted it wrongly; I twisted it so all seemed dark. But it is not! I see that now. The universe - all universes - are far greater, more wonderful, than any can conceive... now I can understand! I am changing now, and will understand still more in time. But this I can tell you now - what you three have, the things you do, the ideals you believe in, are greater far and more reason for hope than any other thing conceived of. Treasure your friendship, and know that you have done, and will do, more for the universe, and even for the purpose of existence, than you can know.

"Farewell, my friends - do not be sorry for me, for I am happy now. But remember this; always be true to the things you believe in. Farewell, my dear friends."

The light faded, and the girl and the passageway with it. For a few moments they stood staring in wonder at what they had just seen. Then Kirk turned to see Spock looking at the tricorder.

"The inter-universe connection has disappeared," announced the Vulcan. "She has gone."

"And she said she was happy," said Kirk thoughtfully. "She found those answers she was looking for."

"Yes, Jim," replied Spock, knowing full well that Kirk was really asking was he all right now. He had been strangely drawn to the girl; more so after the meld that had so nearly gone disastrously wrong, as if her despair had affected him, taken away the hope which owed nothing to logic. Now he was himself again, and knew, as he had known all along, how important their friendship was. The three of them knew.

"You think that gateway opened up especially for her?" asked McCoy.

"Perhaps, Doctor," said Spock. "Perhaps the other universe needed something only she could provide. She was brilliant. Or perhaps it was



something deeper; the knowledge her encounter with the alien had given her proving useful at last? And she did say she believed in destiny."

"You know something?" said Kirk, putting a hand on each of his friend's shoulders as he began to lead them back along the tunnel, "I think I do, too."

"Starship Captains have to!" grinned McCoy. "It's part of their job! But I know what you mean, Jim," he added, turning serious again. "And she was right about us three, wasn't she?"

"Yes, Doctor," Spock answered him. "She was."

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## REVALATION

by

Liz Putler

Father, forgive me.  
 I have failed you again  
 And yet,  
 In all honesty  
 I cannot feel regret.  
 Recent events have confirmed  
 That I made the right decision  
 All those years ago.  
 I know that, even now,  
 You still have reservations.

Three years ago  
 I myself doubted,  
 I freely confess that.  
 At that time  
 My soul was in torment,  
 And I was ashamed.  
 Ashamed that I felt friendship  
 For a crew of Humans,  
 And much more than friendship  
 For one particular Human.

When I think back  
 To that fateful day  
 On which I made my decision  
 To return to Vulcan,  
 To banish completely  
 The emotions that threatened  
 To destroy me,  
 And realise just what I so nearly lost  
 Forever!

Never again!  
 After so many years of searching,  
 Years of loneliness and doubt,  
 I have found my place,  
 My reason for life.  
 I ask forgiveness,  
 But I cannot change.  
 Accept me for what I am,  
 A bridge between two worlds;  
 A bridge of your making.

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## MEMORIES OF ANOTHER DAY

by

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Margaret Rainey

He stood at the crest of the dune and gazed out over the barren landscape before him. The sun beat down relentlessly, forcing from his brow beads of sweat that trickled unheeded down his face. Beside him the horse snorted restlessly, and pawed at the sandy ground with its forehoof. From below him, to the rear, he heard his name being borne faintly in the slight breeze; he paid no heed. Again, louder, the call was repeated. Sighing, he turned, and gathered up the reins to lead his horse back down the slope. His chief lieutenant and best friend approached him, voice rasping from a parched throat.

"Nothing but sand. Three days now, and no water. This is madness. How many more men and beasts must we lose?"

"We will prevail. We must prevail. Another day's march should get us clear of the desert, and the enemy will not expect us to come upon them from this direction. We go on."

"But the men are weakened, dying of thirst. Morale is low; the horses are falling in their tracks..."

He turned a cool gaze on his friend, in spite of the sweltering heat. "We go on," he repeated.

A cry rose from far down the ranks. Weary heads were raised as a trooper stumbled along the file, carrying a helmet upside down in his hands. The man came to a halt before his leader, and threw himself to his knees.

"Lord," he gasped, "water! A small gully... only a helmet full... dry now." The soldier proffered the helmet of muddy water to his king.

Water. A thousand men held their breaths as the word reached their ears. Water. After three days and nights, and only one helmet full. Were the gods so unfair?

The king took the helmet in his hand and spoke to the soldier. "This is all? There is no more?"

"None, my lord."

The metal was cool in his hands, and his very being cried out for water. He gazed longingly at the liquid, then forced a laugh from a dry throat, and turned the helmet right side up. The precious fluid splashed on the dry sand, and was gone in an instant.

"No, my friend. I thank you for your kindness, but I have no need of it. I can manage." He helped the soldier to his feet, and met the wondering gaze of the column of men. Awestruck murmurs rose from the ranks.

"We go on," he said again, and collecting the reins of his horse, he trudged off ahead of the army.

Tired veterans took a deep breath, cursed the heat, and followed their leader, wondering why they had ever doubted him. He would see them through.

As he strode across the sand, a faint buzzing began in his ears, which grew louder, more insistent; and suddenly...

... he was awake. The door buzzed again. God, his throat was parched! Glancing at the chronometer, he swore mildly at the time he'd overslept, and throwing on a robe he yelled the command that permitted his visitor to enter.

Leonard McCoy strolled in, and gave him the once-over. "Well, mornin', Jim. Having a lie-in?"

"Not intentionally, Bones. Must've missed the alarm. You just woke me



out of a rather vivid dream."

McCoy grinned. "Oh yeah? What was she like?"

Kirk grimaced ruefully as he began to dress. "No such luck. S'funny, but these dreams have been recurring for a while now, always the same kind of thing, but somehow I seem to get wakened up before I find out what they're really about." He shrugged into his tunic. "I suppose you're going to tell me that recurring dreams are a sign of stress, and that it's time for a full physical?"

McCoy looked thoughtful. "Is it a nightmare of any sort?"

Kirk shook his head.

"Well, I'd say it's probably just too many cheese sandwiches for supper. C'mon, we're late for that Heads of Department meeting." As the door swished shut behind them, he continued, "However, now that you do mention physicals..."

Kirk groaned.

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"Captain's Log, Stardat 7513.2." Kirk paused to survey the Bridge and collect his thoughts. "We have completed the survey of the Kakrafon system, and collected data are being evaluated by Mr. Spock's department. Said data will be transmitted as soon as evaluation complete. Our next destination is the planet Bellerophon, where the Medical Department is scheduled to run annual physicals on the members of the scientific colony there, and where we hope to see for ourselves some of the latest results achieved by Dr. Rhine and his staff in their various fields of research."

He snapped off the recorder. "Helm, come about to 231 mark 9. Warp factor two."

"Aye, sir. E.T.A. Bellerophon twenty-five hours."

"Very good." He checked the chronometer. "Well, Mr. Anderson, she's all yours. It's been a long day, and I intend to hit the sack." He relinquished the command chair to the Officer of the Watch. "Seems like a quiet night, but if you have any problems, don't hesitate to call me."

"Very good, sir. Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

He left the Bridge and began his nightly prowling of the now dimmed corridors. No reason in particular to do so, but he liked the quiet of this time of night, and the feeling of communion with his ship - 'putting the ship to bed', as he thought of it.

'Most illogical,' a certain Vulcan would no doubt say, but on more than one occasion he'd caught that self-same Vulcan doing the very same thing. With a chuckle, he reached his quarters, and headed for bed.

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He sat astride his horse, fuming with impatience at the delay in the return of his scouts. The army waited also. The city which they were besieging remained silent, forbidding, as its blank walls stared out unseeingly over the plain towards the mountains. From the distance mounted figures approached, coming to a halt only yards in front of their leader.

"Well?" he snapped.

"It is true, My Lord. The barbarian force has tracked us through the mountains and seized the only pass. We are cut off. We cannot retreat, and there is no other way through these hills. They have us trapped between them and the city."

He contemplated this news in silence. His lieutenants looked at each other with a trace of alarm. By unspoken consent, it was left to his chief lieutenant to approach him.



"So. What do we do now? Can't go forward, can't go back. What else is left? Up?" This last with a degree of sarcasm.

He quashed a hasty reply, and tried to calm himself. "Let me think." He dismounted, and wandered off some distance alone.

With a glance back at the rest of the assembly, his friend strode after him. "You had better think, and fast. I hate to say it, but you got us into this mess. If you hadn't been so eager to go dashing in where the gods fear to tread, we could've taken our time, and dealt with these Illyrians before we ever started this seige. You're too headstrong for your own good at times."

He waved a hand irritably. "All right, all right. Point taken. So, given the situation we're in now, what would you do?"

His friend paused and looked around. "Well, by all the rules of logic, there's not a lot we can do that's constructive. The alternatives would seem to be, fight and lose, or surrender and lose. I can't say I'm keen on either."

"Hmmm." His eyes took in the landscape as he calculated the possibilities. "What about fight and win?"

His friend blinked once or twice. "Would you care to enlarge on that?"

He turned with a maniac grin on his face. "My friend, the best defence is a good offence, so let's offend a few people. Form up the tropps. Here's what we'll do..."

The Illyrian horde gazing down from the foothills saw the army below them forming up into a massive phalanx, with the mounted troops on either side. The main body of men, in files 120 deep, coalesced into a giant armoured creature, sun glinting off shields, helmets, spear tips. Two hundred mounted men formed wings of the creature, sprouting from either side. An unnatural silence fell over the plain as all movement ceased, and the army seemed frozen to the spot. Then suddenly, at no obvious command, the massed spears swung upwards to the vertical salute, then dipped again to battle order, and the mass began to move as one. The tramp of feet, the creak of harness, the clank of metal, were borne faintly over the ground to barbarian ears.

The mass of men and beasts moved in unison, beginning an incredible display of close-order drill. In total silence the phalanx advanced, swung right, then left, in perfect time. They formed lines, wheeled into columns, moved through an array of intricate formations, never missing a beat, just as though it was their own parade ground they marched upon. Throughout, no word was uttered, no command given. The mass of soldiery moved as one giant creature with a mind and will of its own, and the barbarians watching had never observed the like.

From the surrounding foothills they stared in amazement at the display taking place before them. The hypnotic rhythm of the changing formations seemed to draw them forward like a magnet, and gradually they edged out from their positions to gain a better view of this incredible spectacle. Enthralled, one group after another straggled closer to the enemy, forgetting caution totally in the sheer spell of what was happening before them. The weaving formations continued to change with precision, and in silence. Birds could be heard flapping in a nearby tree. Enchanted, the barbarians drew yet closer.

Suddenly there was a faint horn blowing in the distance, then abruptly, a mind-shattering explosion of sound, as every man in the massed phalanx beat his spear violently against his shield, and at the top of his lungs yelled a war cry that echoed from the hills around them. The left wing of the cavalry was already in wedge formation, and thundering down upon the confused tribesmen, who scattered in terror, their nerve broken.

The army was close behind now, picking off small groups of fugitives who hadn't known which way to run. The parade ground precision now dropped, they fell into their other well-rehearsed role of war machine, relentlessly pursuing the enemy, and securing the pass from which they had been cut off. The



tribesmen scattered and were gone, utterly defeated by tactics the like of which they had never experienced before.

As the battle receded he reined in his horse, and waved his sword in the air to call his friend to him; as the other galloped up, he was met with the same reckless, boyish grin.

"Well? I told you it would work!"

"You're crazy, d'you know that? Brilliant, but crazy!"

"Crazy, no. Desperate, yes!" They both laughed. "And brilliant, undoubtedly! Come on, we still have a little matter of a city to capture." He spurred his horse back towards the city walls.

His friend looked after him, both eyebrows hoisted, as he muttered to himself, "Who's more crazy round here, him or me?" Then he too rode back towards the city.

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Kirk started as he awoke, for a moment still imagining the dust of battle around him. He yawned and stretched. Boy, that was a close one! He wondered where his mind had conjured that one up from. Still, unorthodox tactics were often the best. What was it Captain Garrovick had said to him? "When in doubt, do the unexpected."

Yeah, he'd done that on more than one occasion, and got away with it. But really, fancy letting yourself get trapped like that in the first place! Any military commander worth his salt didn't just 'dash in where the gods fear to tread' - although, let's be honest, Jim ol' buddy, maybe you've done that on occasion, too. A couple of times he'd needed a stroke of brilliance to pull himself out of a mess of his own devising.

He chuckled. 'You're too headstrong for your own good at times.' In amusement, as he drifted back to sleep, he wondered how many times he's heard that phrase before.

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He took his breakfast from the ~~selecter~~ and joined Spock at a table with a mumbled, "'Morning, Spock."

"Good morning, Captain." Dark eyes studied him with a trace of concern. He caught their look, and grinned back.

"Don't look at me like that, Spock. My mind just hasn't caught up with my body yet this morning, that's all. I had a really weird dream last night - unorthodox use of sound and surprise as weapons in a military situation. Yeah..." he mused to himself, "pity there's not much way to apply the same effect between Starships. Oh well."

Spock hastily pulled an eyebrow back down from his hairline, and was about to venture a further enquiry, when a southern voice floated lazily across the table.

"You gentlemen mind if I join you?" Without waiting for a reply, McCoy had seated himself beside Kirk, and was staring suspiciously at the food on Spock's tray. "Ye gods, how you can eat that stuff, I'll never know!"

"Doctor, it is evident that there are a great many things you will never know," replied Spock calmly, "least of all..."

"Gentlemen, please!" broke in Kirk with a laugh. "Not first thing in the morning, huh? Let's be a little more civilised at breakfast. Spock, tell me about Bellerophon, and what goes on there. I'd appreciate being able to look at least a little knowledgeable on our arrival there."

Having successfully applied diversionary tactics, Kirk settled down to his food, while Spock expanded on the little he knew of Dr. Johannes Rhine and his work into the unexplored areas of the Human psyche.



"... and in his last despatch to Science Central, Dr. Rhine indicated that he was about to begin a study of the Human mind in a situation of induced regression, to attempt to determine whether experiences described by patients in such a state have, in fact, any basis in reality."

McCoy almost choked on his coffee. "You mean to tell me that this guy's doing the ol' reincarnation bit again? I don't believe it! He gets all those funds for messing about with something that can't be proved one way or the other? Now that's the kinda cushy number I could be doing with!"

"Doctor, I hardly think..."

"Sorry, Spock, hold it there for a moment. Bones, what're you on about?"

"Hell, Jim, they've been at this for at least 300 years. Nobody's ever proved it yet."

"Proved what?"

"Well, you've heard of hypnotic regression, I take it? Abreaction? You hypnotise a patient and take him back through his life to when he was six years old, or whatever. If he had some traumatic experience at age six that's causing psychological problems now, then you take him back to get to the root of it. The patient thinks and acts like a six-year-old, and can recall every detail of his life at that time."

Kirk nodded. "Yeah, I know about that. Go on."

"Well, they eventually discovered that if you regressed a patient back further than the start of his life, you'd get, in most cases, something else coming out. They'd take on different voices, different dialects, and start responding with details of what seemed another life altogether. A few cases were pretty well documented with obscure details the person concerned couldn't possibly know about in what they'd call the 'present life'. Ever since then psychologists have been arguing about what it all means."

"Okay, what does it all mean?"

McCoy smiled. "There, you've got me. I admit I don't know." He looked over at Spock. "What does our resident-observer-of-the-Human-mind-in-action think about it?"

Spock ignored the jibe. "There are several conflicting theories as to the explanation of these observations. There is the 'reincarnation' school of thought, which holds that we all go through a never-ending cycle of lives. Many ancient religions of Earth held such beliefs; the Buddhists, for example, believed in reincarnation on the 47th day after death."

"There is also the school of thought that states that the observations during regression are accurate, but are due merely to the hypnotised mind 'picking up' echoes from the past. And of course there are those who say that the whole phenomenon is falsified and cannot possibly be true."

Kirk sipped at his coffee. "So which do you hold with?"

Spock considered. "On the evidence available, I find it impossible to deny that something is indeed happening under these conditions; but as to what that something is, I have no conclusive data."

Kirk smiled. "Care to speculate, Mr. Spock?"

The Vulcan's eyebrows rose about an inch, as he perceived he was being teased. "I believe you know the answer to that, Captain," he reproved gently.

"Yeah," grumbled McCoy, "Vulcan never speculate. Which is all another way of saying, Jim, that he doesn't know either."

"Well, Bones," said Kirk as he rose to go, "maybe Dr. Rhine will have the answer for us when we get to Bellerophon."



"Assuming standard orbit around Bellerophon, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu. Uhura, get me the colony on visual, then instruct McCoy's team to stand by for beam down."

"Aye, sir. I have Dr. Rhine for you now."

Johannes Rhine was a large jovial man, to whom Kirk quickly warmed. McCoy and his team ran through the colony physicals in no time flat, and were able to report that they'd never found a healthier bunch.

"They're all disgustingly fit, Jim. I may have to pack up my shingle and move to another neighbourhood. Nothin' to do here. Hold on a minute; Dr. Rhine wants to speak to you again."

"Captain Kirk, it would seem that we're wasting your time here. Could we make it up to you by asking yourself and your officers to join us down here for dinner? We'd be glad of the conversation; there's not much of a social life down here, and new faces are always welcome."

Kirk didn't hesitate. "Thank you, Doctor, we'd be happy to accept. I have a Science Officer who's just itching to learn about your latest work. Maybe you'd enlighten us after dinner?"

"More than glad to, Captain. We'll expect you at 19:00 hours."

Kirk signed off, and turned to regard a Vulcan whose eyebrows had made a climb of Olympian proportions.

"Itching, Captain? I assure you, Vulcans..."

"... do not itch," finished off Kirk with a grin. "Merely a little dramatic licence, Mr. Spock. I'm well aware that Vulcans would never do anything as undignified as itching. You have the con."

He swept from the Bridge amid smiles all round, leaving his First Officer to ponder that whenever he thought he finally understood Human beings, they'd just go and do something even more perplexing.

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"... and then the Betelgeusian lungfish said, 'I'm not surprised at these prices!'"

Laughter swept around the table as McCoy delivered his punchline, and the company rose and began to drift through to the lounge for drinks. Scotty and the colony engineer were already deep in technical discussion; Sulu was chatting up an attractive young xenopsychologist; and Uhura had three men quibbling light-heartedly about which of them should escort her to the bar.

"Well, Captain, Mr. Spock, perhaps you'd like a tour of the labs now?" Dr. Rhine looked around. "Where's Dr. McCoy?"

"Right here. I'm not gonna miss this."

They moved off, chatting easily. Kirk was questioning Dr. Rhine. "So you don't use hypnosis as such any more?"

"Oh no. We've developed a bioelectric scanner to tie into the brain waves of the subject and analyse the patterns evident there. It's programmed to ignore those relating to present conditions and delve deeper, to pick up the strongest pattern from the underlying subconscious. It's my theory that there's one life, among many in the past, which is most closely akin to the present, and this one life is the one we can most easily pick up on. I've tried it myself, you know, and it would appear that I was once an alchemist in early Egypt. Fascinating, don't you think?"

"You took the word right outa his mouth," drawled McCoy.

Spock valiantly ignored him. "You are a believer in reincarnation, Dr. Rhine?"



"Well, Mr. Spock, I didn't start out that way, but I'm becoming convinced. Here we are." A large laboratory with a reclining couch in the centre, surrounded by computer equipment, which Spock immediately gravitated towards.

"The subject lies here," continued Rhine, "and is connected to bioelectrodes which enable the computers to analyse the patterns of the subconscious and visualise them inside the subject's brain. The result is that you actually see and feel what's going on around you in another life. It's quite incredible, if I say so myself. All you have to do is lie there and empty your mind. It's like dreaming, only a thousand times more vivid."

"Hmmm," mused Kirk, "and I thought I had vivid dreams. You say it's quite safe?"

"Totally, Captain. The subject is under medical supervision at all times. May I ask what you meant about your dreams?"

"Oh, nothing really," Kirk replied. "I've just been having some pretty strong ones lately. Bones here tells me to cut down on the cheese sandwiches."

McCoy bridled in mock indignation. "I'm a doctor, not a culinary artiste. I never give gastronomic advice. At least, not for free."

Ignoring the byplay, Rhine looked thoughtful. "You might make a good subject, Captain. We frequently find that those who dream vividly and can recall their dreams in detail have strong underlying patterns in the subconscious that we can pick up most easily."

"Oh, come on!" broke in McCoy. "No disrespect, but don't you mean those with the most vivid imaginations who can most easily conjure up their fantasies?"

Rhine smiled. "Nobody can ever say you don't speak your mind, Dr. McCoy. But I take no offence. Yes, I suppose it's a possibility that what we experience here is all fantasy, but after my own attempts I'd say that it's a vanishingly small possibility. I knew nothing about ancient Egypt, apart from pyramids and funny symbols on walls, but when I went under, I was there. I knew who I was, where I was, the functions of objects around me, details of the lives of people I met. I could write a treatise on the Egypt of Nefertiti and know that it was that way, but how can I prove that objectively? I can't, but inside me, believe me, I know."

"Well, I suppose the arguments will go on for another 300 years," said McCoy.

"Not if I can help it," smiled Rhine.

Kirk was insepeting the couch and equipment along with Spock. "What do you think, Spock?"

"I see no obvious danger to life or limb in the arrangement, yet I would still counsel caution in its use. The unknown has always an elemnt of danger." Hepaused "However, grant for a moment the possibility of Dr. Rhine's being correct. If this were the way to travel subjectively in the past, with complete accuracy in observation, think what a valuable historical and archaeol-ogical tool it might prove."

"Hmmm. Interesting. You're certain it's quite safe, Doctor?"

"Absolutely, Captain. I stake my reputation on it."

"Now hold on, Jim. You're not seriously thinking of becoming a guinea pig, are you?"

"What harm would it do, Bones? Medical supervision of Dr. Rhine and yourself, Spock to watch the computers... how could I be safer?"

"By not doing it at all!" exploded McCoy.

"Oh come on, Bones, where's your spirit of adventure? Wouldn't you like to know if you were once a medicine man in Darkest Africa?"



"No, I would not! Spock, you talk to him. This is a damnfool notion."

"I tend to agree, Doctor. However, I am sure you know as well as I that when the Captain sets his mind to something, the most you and I can do is to swim with the prevailing tide, and do our best to ensure his safety."

"Dammit, you want to see this, don't you? It's all just a great big experiment to you - well, it's Jim's life we're on about!"

"Which one, Bones?" Kirk smiled, and placed a hand on McCoy's shoulder. "C'mon, Bones, let's see how it works. If it goes wrong you can always look me up in another life and say 'I told you so'."

McCoy sighed and brought out his medikit. "One of these days you'll be just a bit to headstrong for your own good. Permanently."

Kirk had to smile.

"What's so funny?" demanded McCoy.

Kirk shook his head.

"Some people have a warped sense of humour," muttered McCoy.

Kirk settled on the couch and relaxed, while Rhine connected bioelectrodes to his temples. McCoy hovered nearby with a hand scanner. Kirk winked at him, and got a grunted, "Huh!" in return.

"Okay, Captain, all set. Just relax and let your mind drift. We'll watch you from this end."

Kirk took a few deep breaths, and his eyes caught Spock's. An unspoken affirmation passed between them, and Kirk closed his eyes with a smile. His mind began to drift, and he felt a warm, sleepy sensation. Now he was floating in nothingness, and there were voices all around him one voice in particular, calling his name... his name... his name...

"...Alexander!"

He twisted like a cat at the warning cry, and struck down the enemy who was almost upon him. His close friend Hephaestion was beside him an instant later.

"They're withdrawing into the city. We'll never make it through the gates in time!"

He nodded as he paused to draw breath and take stock of things. He was covered in dirt and blood, a little of it his own, and the dust of battle was in his eyes and mouth. He ached all over from the sustained physical effort of just staying alive in the middle of a battlefield, and he knew that his men were close to exhaustion.

"They're closing the gates now. Bring up the scaling ladders."

Hephaestion moved off to spread the word, and while waiting he considered their situation.

This stubborn city was the key to the entire road eastwards from here. It controlled the trade and commerce routes for hundreds of miles, and he could not afford to leave it undefeated behind him as he continued his expansion to the east. They must take it now, settle things with its people, and leave friends, not enemies, behind them when they moved on. The resisting aristocracy was rumoured to be oppressive to the people. So much the better. Depose them, bring the city into the Empire where he would see it got fair treatment, and push on to new conquests.

By the gods, but he was tired! Why was there so much killing involved in the forging of an empire? Couldn't they see that they'd benefit under his rule? At least they'd be in the company of half the civilised world, where there was now peace, not war. There was culture, education, art and science.



Different cultures living in relative harmony together. But Zeus, the cost in lives!

Maybe he was just getting too old for all this trail-blazing stuff out in uncharted territories. And once he'd charted all the territory, conquered all the world, all the peoples of the earth living together as one - what then? No more worlds to civilise.

He smiled wryly to himself at that thought. "And maybe you're just getting morbid," he muttered to himself. "You wouldn't have it any other way, would you?"

His company commanders appeared through the dust, egging on men carrying long wooden ladders.

"To the walls!" he yelled. "Let's go!"

The ladders were slowly placed against the walls, despite resistance from above in the form of showers of spears, stones and arrows. A flurry of missiles drove his army back from the ladders, and they seemed hesitant to return to the fray. Men were dropping like flies around him under the onslaught from above, and they were gradually losing ground to the defenders.

Hephaestion grabbed his arm. "This is suicide! We'll never get up there!" he yelled above the din. "Let's regroup and try something different."

"Like what? Flying in? The only way is over those ladders, or through the gates. Get the battering rams to work on them, and follow me."

"What? Where? Alexander, wait!"

He sprinted off towards the walls and propped a fallen ladder upright against them. Holding his shield above him, he ran lightly to the top, and engaged the nearest defenders in combat. His men stood horror-struck as he fought his way onto the rampart and perched there alone, holding off the entire city, or so it seemed.

"Gods give me strength!" howled Hephaestion, more in frustration than piety, as he grabbed another ladder and prepared to follow his king. Halfway up he shouted again, "Alexander, come back!"

Alone at the top, he fought his way into a clearing, and had a brief moment to glance back. An anguished chief lieutenant halfway up a ladder, and disbelief and sheer horror on the faces of those below. They'd follow him, he knew, but sometimes it took a little persuasion.

Raising his sword arm aloft, he uttered a war cry and jumped down, inside the city. He heard the yell from massed throats behind him as his men surged forward and up the ladders, their only thought now to save him. Then he had problems of his own. Back to the wall and fighting off three men, he heard a thud as Hephaestion landed beside him and joined the fray.

"This is totally crazy! I just hope the next world's more peaceful than this one!"

Two more men landed beside them, Leonnatus and Peucestas, both lieutenants who'd been with him for years, and the four of them formed a defensive square and took on all comers. The surge of men up the overloaded ladders had caused them to break apart, and now there were frantic batterings of a large wooden ram at the city gates.

The quartet inside fought on interminably. Peucestas fell to a spear thrust, then it was a defensive triangle. The gates cracked and weakened, but did not give. Leonnatus fell to an arrow in the throat as the final bar holding the massive gates splintered, and the army surged inside in a wave.

He knew an instant of triumph, then a searing pain took him just under the ribs. With a gasp he fell to his knees and stared in amazement at the wooden shaft of an arrow protruding from a crack in his armour. He pitched to one side



and lay in a red haze of pain. He was dimly aware of Hephaestion standing astride him, fighting off several men, then the battle seemed to recede as his army advanced into the city. Hephaestion knelt beside him and examined him with concern.

"It doesn't seem too bad, but I'll bet it hurts like mad."

He managed a nod.

"I'll fetch the physician."

He made a grab and locked onto Hephaestion's arm. "No! Don't leave me!"

Dark brown eyes stared down in alarm, and a rich comforting voice floated down to him.

"I won't leave you. Relax. Relax."

Cool hands wiped his brow as he stared up into those expressive eyes and murmured, "Don't leave me. Don't leave me." He was floating now in nothingness, and there were voices around him, one in particular, calling his name... his name... his name...

"...Jim! Jim!"

Strong hands cradled his head as he looked up into those dark eyes, still concerned, and murmured, "Knew you wouldn't leave me." He took a deep breath, and realised he was still grasping an arm in a crushing grip.

Snapping fully awake, he spoke to its owner. "Spock, what's wrong?"

"I'll tell you what's wrong!" broke in McCoy's voice. "Your pain level was right off the scanner, that's what's wrong!"

"Dr. McCoy, I assure you the Captain was in no physical danger," soothed Rhine.

"Well, dammit, I know what my instruments tell me!" snapped McCoy.

"Bones, Bones." Kirk stood up. "I'm fine, really. Take it easy."

McCoy ran over him with the scanner, and seemed somewhat mollified.

"Captain," Spock inquired, "might we ask what you experienced?"

Kirk paused, remembering, wondering, unsure of where to begin. He gazed at Spock, seeing those compassionate eyes that he'd looked into two minutes ago; or was it two millenia?

\* \* \*

He settled back into an armchair in the Officers' Lounge and gazed out at the stars as he sipped his drink.

"Are you trying to tell me," drawled McCoy, "that you were Alexander the Great?"

"Bones," Kirk laughed, "I'm not trying to tell you anything. I'm just saying what I seemed to experience. It was realistic, I admit, but reincarnation, fantasy, or whatever, I don't know."

"Mmmph," grunted McCoy. "Well, just don't go getting any delusions of grandeur, that's all, or I'll get the whole crew to rally round and put you in your place."

Kirk smiled. "I'll bear it in mind, O Physician. Now begone - I have matters to contemplate." He waved an imperious hand.

McCoy gave a lopsided grin. "Yessuh, Massah. At once, O Lord King." He bowed his way backwards to the door. "By the way," he delivered as a parting shot, "I want you for another physical in the morning - just a precaution."

Kirk groaned and threw a cushion at the closing door, shaking his head



in amusement. He turned back to his drink and watched the stars go by. An echo stirred in his mind.

//No more worlds to civilise.//

He chuckled at the thought. Wrong there, ol' boy. A whole infinity of worlds out there.

The doors parted again, and Spock entered. He sat beside Kirk in companionable silence, and together they contemplated the view.

Yes, he mused, a whole infinity. He had found his other worlds.

Where is Great Alexander?

Great Alexander lives and reigns.

Medieval Greek proverb.

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### REUNITED - NEVER TO BE PARTED.

What would I do if I lost him once more  
Through accident or circumstance?  
I do not think I could live without him -  
Again...  
For two and a half years my life was but existence  
Because he had gone.

I sit within the centre seat once more -  
Turn quickly to meet his eyes  
Like before...  
But he is no longer there.  
His computer console is behind me now, separate,  
And I feel I must search for him all the more.

The ship is so different now,  
And I find it difficult  
To adjust.  
But I know there is one constant  
Amidst the change - Spock.  
He has not changed and we still feel the same.

It took time to get back to 'normal',  
And we have spoken little about those missing years.  
The past is past and we have a future yet to come.  
Things are so... normal... now.  
But I made a decision last night - alone.  
I will never let us be apart again.

Karen Hayden

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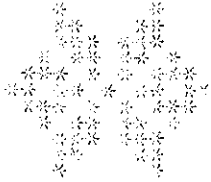
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Scotty : You remind me of London.

Kyle: Because of my English accent?

Scotty: No, because you're always in fog.

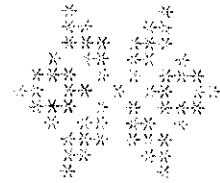




## ALTERNATIVE LOGIC

by

Lorraine Goodison



When I left the turbolift on Deck Ten and walked along into the observation lounge, I was more than a little relieved to see that no-one else was watching the panorama of stars outwith the Enterprise. Perhaps I was being a little anti-social, but after a day of social niceties and chit-chat I didn't feel up to enduring more of the same. For all that they said, some people were better keeping silent. Of course, no-one wanted to be the first to broach the one subject on everyone's mind. Five years, and it was almost over, bar a few days.

I found a comfortable corner and thought of stepping once again on the soil of Earth. Funny, there were no hankerings for my home planet, no feeling of elation, just... acceptance.

I suppose it had not entirely sunk in at that point. Time had been taken up with last-minute reports and filing, tidying everything up for the 'experts' on Earth to mull over and criticize. Leonard McCoy had been in a foul mood during the necessary assembling of Medical Section's records, but I had a feeling it was caused by something more than a dislike of paper-work. However, I didn't pry. Like most others on the ship, I was caught up in my own mixed emotions.

Perhaps there were others like me, scattered throughout the Enterprise, lost in thought and alone in reflection. All those years... Only a few in the passage of time, but long enough to write an indelible litany of remembrances on our minds.

Strange, then, when I could have recalled so many different events, that I chose to remember a certain day when I worked alone in the research lab, labelling samples for storing in the drugs store.

I did not hear him enter, he moves so quietly sometimes. When he spoke, I jumped, nearly dropping a bottle in the process. I turned, trying to appear unflustered and capable.

"Mr. Spock! You - ah - you startled me."

"My apologies. It was unintentional."

"That's all right..." I became aware of the simpering smile on my face and found refuge in picking up some labels which had dropped to the floor. "If you're looking for Dr. McCoy, he's in the..."

"I am aware of the doctor's whereabouts, thank you," he interrupted smoothly. "No, it is you I wish to speak with."

There was no glib answer to that. Oh, I knew what he wanted to talk about, and how difficult it must have been for him to come here like this. I wanted to help him break the uncomfortable barrier, but since my mouth chose that moment to dry up, I busied myself with the samples.

Finally, reluctantly, he broke the silence. "Nurse Chapel, we must talk about... what happened earlier."

"Yes, I suppose we must." //God, stop being so patronising!// I chided myself. //It's just as difficult for him.//

"Mr. Spock..."

"Nurse Chapel, I..."

We stopped, confused and embarrassed by our tangle of words, aware of the deepening silence. If we didn't talk this out now...



I forced myself to speak. "Mr. Spock, I want to apologise for what I said. I... I know I embarrassed you. It was stupid, irresponsible, and you can rest assured it will not happen again."

//There. Rehearsed speech over and done with. Nurse, take a pat on the back.//

"What you said..." Spock hesitated momentarily. "It must have been difficult for you."

//Oh no, very easy as a matter of fact. At least, while that damn virus was affecting me. Oh, why won't he leave, push it away?//

"It's never easy, speaking your true feelings."

//Gods, what a trite remark! Straight from 'Space-Age Romances'!//

I smiled slightly, still avoiding his eyes. "The virus loosened my tongue a little too much, I think."

"I have sometimes wondered if living would not be made slightly easier if such feelings were not aired more often."

I glanced up, startled, but his eyes were shadowed, the expression closed.

"You said you... loved me. Is this the case?"

Holding back the sigh I nodded one, slightly. "It was foolish of me. I didn't mean to..."

"Nurse Chapel - Christine - do not distress yourself."

A prickling began at the back of my eyes. Jesus, that was all I needed! My hand was gripping a bottle too tightly. I relaxed my grip.

"It's quite all right, Mr. Spock. I'm not affected that much. It was a mistake, that's all. Some things should remain unsaid. If you wish, we can forget it ever happened."

Concern was in his eyes, and I could see he was struggling to retain his facade of emotionlessness. The past traumatic hours must still be affecting him, and the Vulcan was being torn by Human emotions. I hadn't wanted to hurt him...

"I do not think we will be able to forget," he said simply. "Nurse Chapel, knowing your feelings as I do, I feel there is only one solution."

//Solution? Ha, now I'm a problem, is that it?// my cynicism cried. Leonard McCoy might think he has the corner on sceptical feelings, but I have my fair share too.

"I believe we should be married."

I stared at him, my mouth open, unable to hide the surprise his level statement had caused. I was unable to speak, lost for words to reply to this long-awaited request.

Spock straightened, hands clasped behind his back. He might have been relating a scientific formula for all the expression in his voice.

"I realise my proposal is something of a surprise to you - perhaps I should have worded it in a better way. However, I am not experienced in such matters. On Vulcan, one is bonded when young, and does not..."

I remembered his chosen wife on Vulcan, something about her dying a few months ago. I hadn't taken much notice of the scuttlebutt news then, but evidently Spock felt it left him free to make this offer.

Offer! How many times had I wished - hoped - for this moment? How many times... and now it had come, I wished it had not. My pride was a little bruised, I think. For a moment I was offended that he should even think of such a proposal, not from love, but out of a sense of duty! I couldn't marry on such terms! I couldn't live with... Oh, hell! He was only doing what he saw as the best, most logical thing. I had declared my love for him, and he



did not want to see me hurt.

I think in that instant I saw what a sham my feelings for Spock really were. Unrequited love. I'd never thought of it that way, but now I would have to be the unemotional one.

"Mr. Spock... I... I won't say I'm not flattered, or surprised for that matter... but..."

"An answer is not required immediately, Christine."

The softness of his tone only served to confuse me more. One part of me wanted to say yes, to shout it for the whole ship to hear... And the other part said no.

I forced myself to face him, knowing he would have to be told straight, no dodging the issue.

"Spock, I'm sorry. I have to refuse."

No reaction. Nothing. God, was he angry, or hurt, or what?

"I see. May I ask why?"

"Because... because I don't want it to be that way. I don't want a marriage born out of a sense of duty. I want... Oh, it sounds so stupid, but I want love to come first. On both sides." My eyes searched his face for an expression. "Can you understand that?"

He nodded, but I could not tell for sure whether he truly understood. I wanted him to. I smiled half-heartedly, trying to lighten the moment.

"Besides, I would be the wrong person for you. Too emotional, for one thing. And can you see me on Vulcan? I'd probably... Sorry, I'm making a mockery of you. I don't want to do that."

"I understand, Christine."

//Do you? Do you honestly, Spock?//

Silence fell in a thick shroud, emphasising the heightened emotions between us. I began to apologise again, stopping myself before I made a bigger fool of myself.

"If you wish, we will not discuss this again," Spock said evenly, and I immediately wanted to bite back my words, aware that behind his calm lay the emotions he had always suppressed.

I nodded, averting my eyes so he could not see the sickening self-pity welling up from within.

The next minute we were exchanging pleasantries, and he was gone, leaving me to realise what I had done.

//Marriage to a Vulcan would never work,// I told myself sternly, denying the voice which whispered differently. //Never work in a million years. Damn the virus! Why couldn't we have passed by that planet? Why wasn't the cure discovered before... Before I learned some home truths about myself?//

\* \* \*

A high-pitched giggle brought me out of the recollections, and I glanced round as the door slid shut.

"Shhh..." came an exaggerated whisper. "Might be someone here..."

Another giggle as two young people looked with owlish expressions around the room.

"Who?" whispered the girl, an ensign from Communications.

"Try a Head Nurse," I interposed loudly, rising from my shadowed corner. They were slightly drunk, obviously making the most of their last nights

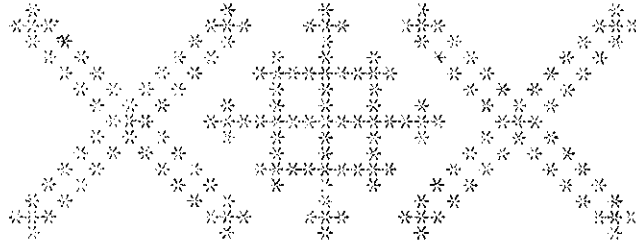


together. Not exactly within regulations, but I wasn't going to clamp down on a little harmless fun, not so close to journey's end. Smiling to dispel their fears, I made for the door.

"I'd make sure the door is locked first. A few others might have the same idea..."

Emerging into the bright corridor, I felt suddenly old beside those youngsters. Oh, I wasn't that ancient, but I felt the five years which had gone by on this metal island called a Starship.

Five years older, five years wiser? Maybe. I wasn't really all that sure.



### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Janette Burton

My eyes betray the bitter pain I feel.

Why, my friend, why?

There was a time you would not have hurt me so.

Why, my friend, why?

I do not understand. I can not believe.

Why, my friend, why?

I search my soul. What have I done?

( I dare not yield, though I'm sorely tempted.

Please understand, please.

I must follow this through without temptation.

Please understand, please.

After so many years of effort and struggle.

Please understand, please.

I must ignore you, ignore fate, and find my own answers.)

Are you using me, using my ship?

Why, my friend, why?

After five years of trust, friendship and love.

Why, my friend, why?

I am no different now than I was then, so,

Why, my friend, why?

It was you who left without a goodbye.

( Enterprise, Sickbay, McCoy and, yes, Jim.

I should have known.

All these years I've been blind, stubborn, wrong.

I should have known.

Of all the people in this entire universe,

I should have known.

It took V'Ger to teach me what I've always known.)

